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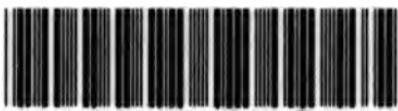
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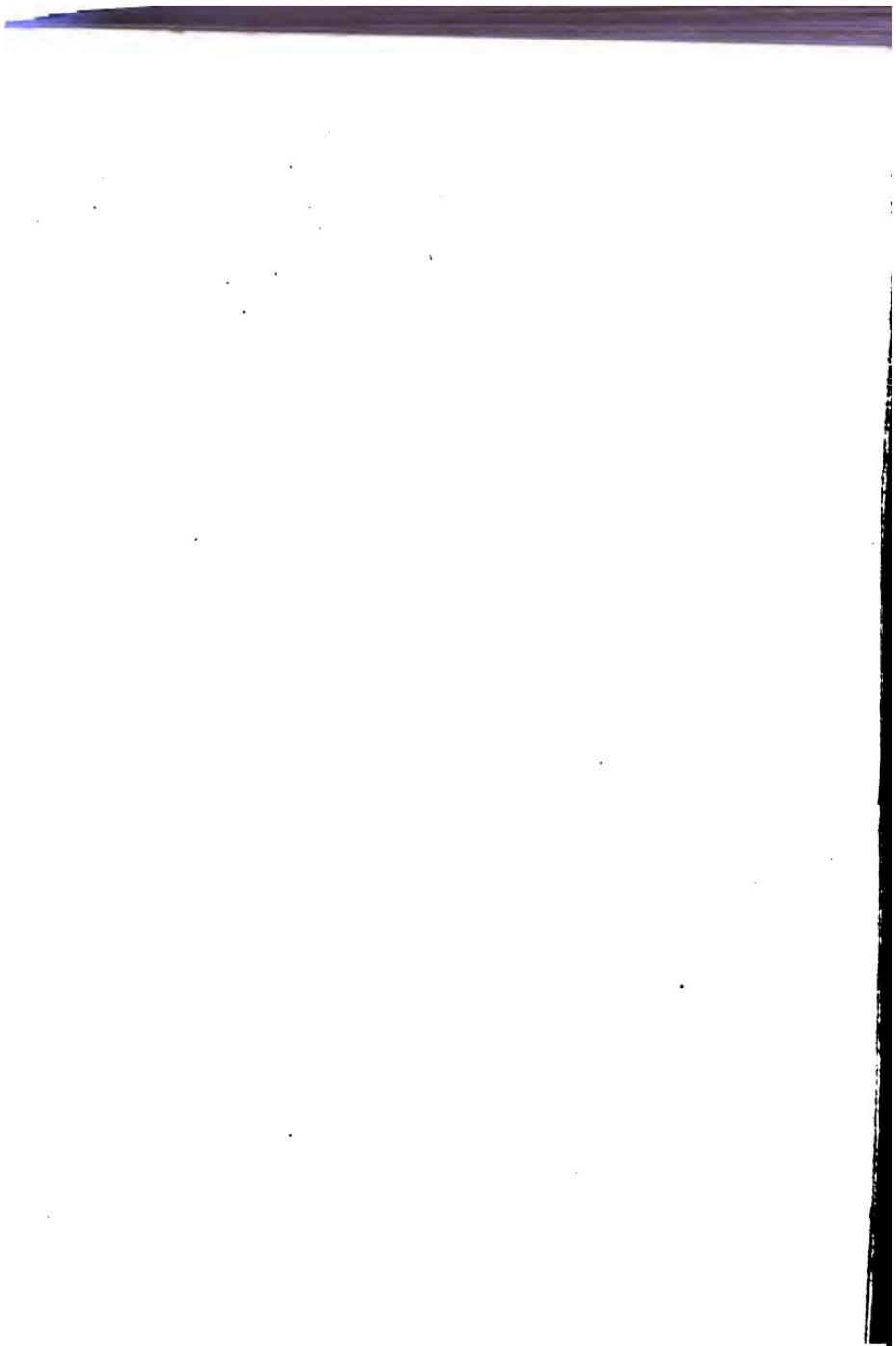


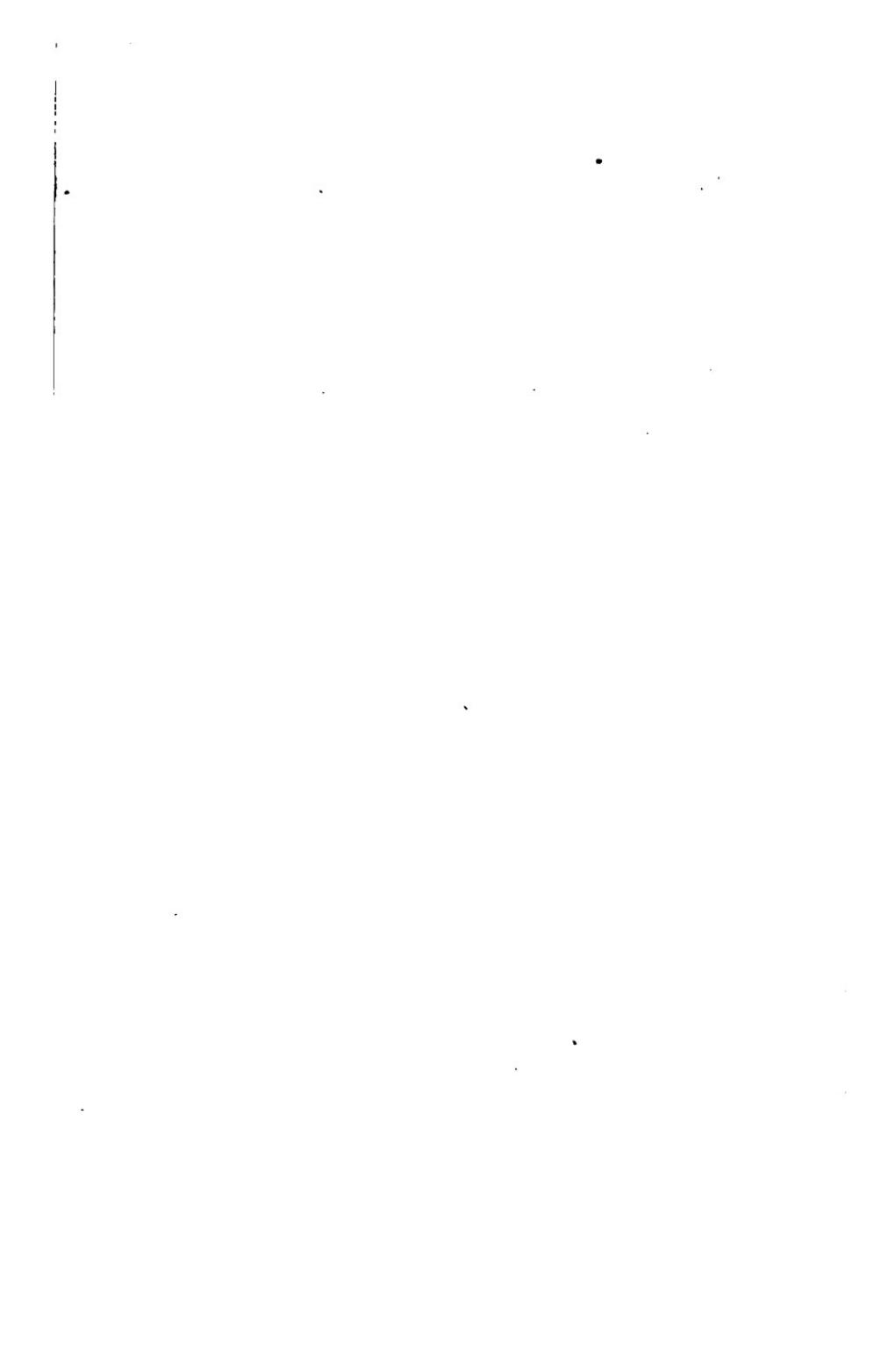
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MERELINA;

OR,

SUCH IS LIFE:

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY T. T. T.

LONDON : LONGMAN AND CO.

CHELMSFORD, H. GUY; COLCHESTER, KNIBB, DENNIS;
MALDON, YOUNGMAN.

MDCCCLII.

749.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

CHELMSFORD :
PRINTED BY MEGGY AND CHALK.

P R E F A C E.

THE following tale was written to relieve the monotony of a secluded country life, and served to pass away agreeably many an hour that might otherwise have proved tedious.

It is not important that the public should be made acquainted with the motives which induced the writer to submit it to their view, and if it were, she does not think she could assign any *one* in particular. To assert that she was prompted *only* by a desire to afford amusement to others, would appear too disinterested a motive to gain credence,—to confess that the spur of necessity compelled her, would be too humiliating,—and to say that it was in compliance with the solicitations of friends, would only be offering an *old-*

fashioned excuse for troubling the public with what, in the present prolific and talented age, may be deemed unworthy of notice.

The authoress is aware that her little work possesses no extraordinary merit to rescue it from such a fate, yet as it has been her endeavour to represent life to the sanguine as a scene of mingled joy and sorrow, and to convince them that it is religion, and religion *only*, which can enable them to bear the one with *moderation*, and the other with *resignation*, she earnestly hopes that if she has been so unfortunate as to fail in her attempt, she may yet meet with indulgence, and escape *censure*, if she does not receive applause.

M E R E L I N A , &c.

LETTER I.

MERELINA ST. CLAIR TO HER FRIEND, AGNES
PONSONBY.

Woodstock.

Do you tell me, my dear Agnes, with all the gravity of a sexagenarian, that perfect happiness is not attainable in this life ; that the world is a stage of trials and vexations ; and that pleasure is but a high sounding and empty name ? Ah ! highly as I approve of your opinions on most subjects, for this once you must allow me to differ from you ; and pardon me, if I say I think it scarcely possible such can be the *real* sentiments of a girl on the eve of being united to the being she prefers above all others, and whose love to her *is*, and *must be*, from his conduct, beyond a doubt. No, Agnes, you cannot be otherwise than happy whilst enjoying the society of your beloved cousin Wallace,

and his amiable family. I long to hear what you think of his sisters, and how you like Clifton. Pray write me a full account of every thing, for the letter you sent your mamma the other day was very unsatisfactory to your inquisitive friend, but at present I am completely absorbed in my own concerns. I feel the most ecstatic joy, and it is not in the least diminished when I take a peep into the future, bright and unclouded as it appears. The most pleasing illusions flit across my mind, and transport my soul. Phantoms of bliss rise in quick succession before my eyes, and promise me a long respite from all that is disagreeable; every sensation is awakened, and my heart swells with the liveliest emotions of joy. The hour of emancipation is arrived—yet stay, I would not use *such* a term, for it would seem to imply previous bondage, and far be it from me even to hint that I have passed an unhappy hour, or undergone unnecessary restriction, with your dear mamma. She has been *all*, and *more* than all, to me, during those years of childhood through which I have been deprived of a parent's tender care: she has been my guide, my counsellor, my instructor; and shall I look forward with any thing like pleasure to the hour of our separation. Forbid it affection and gratitude! This is not my meaning, but in contemplating the visions of happiness presented to my view, I can with difficulty restrain my feelings. I forget, however, whilst indulging in this rhapsody, that you as yet are ignorant of the cause, and must hasten to inform you. Well, then, dear Agnes, as I was sitting in my grotto this morning, amusing

myself by playing your favorite air of Rossini's on the guitar, Mrs. Ponsonby approached me, carrying a letter in her hand. I recognised the handwriting of my father, and hastily seizing it, perused with eagerness what I shall copy *verbatim* :—

" LORD ST. CLAIR TO MRS. PONSONBY.

" Respected Madam,

" The post-mark on this letter will doubtless occasion you considerable surprise, but business of importance having required my immediate presence in England, I left Greece about three months ago in great haste, and uncertain what might be the issue of my voyage, I deemed it advisable not to acquaint you earlier with my proceedings. Matters being now arranged to my satisfaction, and having purchased a pretty villa near Henley, I purpose waiting on you to-morrow, about three o'clock, to claim at your hands *that* daughter whom I have entrusted you with, during the fifteen years of my residence abroad. Accuse me not of flattery, madam, if I say that should her character in any degree assimilate to that of the amiable lady who ' has reared her tender thought, and taught her young idea to shoot,' she will be all that the fondest father could desire.

" I have the honor to be,

" Madam,

" Your most obedient servant,

" ST. CLAIR."

After perusing this, my Agnes, can you wonder at my joy? To meet a father, from whom I have been separated

for fifteen years ; to be locked in his fond embrace ; to be conducted to an elegant and happy home, to enjoy all the luxuries that wealth can procure, and all the delights that a life of domestic pleasure can yield : to be the idol of a doting parent, who, when he gazes on features that will perhaps recall to his mind the image of her on whom his fondest hopes were once centred, will feel himself unable to refuse any demand, be it never so capricious, oh, tell me ! will not this be happiness ? Yes, ye grave moralists, away with all your sober reasonings, and your cold-hearted philosophy, I heed them not. And you, my kind friend, forgive my delirium, and allow that the perspective of my future life is brilliant enough to dazzle many more wise and more sedate than

Your ever affectionate

MERELINA.

LETTER II.

AGNES PONSONBY TO MERELINA ST. CLAIR.

Clifton.

MY DEAR MERELINA,

I feel that to reason with one, who is determined not to be reasoned with, to argue with one, who would turn a deaf ear to all that might be urged, or to speak of the transitory nature of sublunary things, and the vicissitudes to which all are subjected, would at

present be equally useless and absurd. *Besides*, though my life *has* been spent "midst sunshine and midst shade," its duration does not yet exceed twenty years, and these have not sufficed to render me the cold, apathetic sort of creature your letter would seem to picture. My heart is as tenderly alive to joy, and as deeply depressed by sorrow, as your own, but early grief has perhaps matured my character, and called into action those reflective faculties which might otherwise have lain dormant. There *was* a time when wealth poured her treasures at my feet, and you have often heard the tale, "of what my faithless fortune promised once," and how my hopes were buried in the grave of my revered father. Would that his liberal mind, and high sense of rectitude, had been transmitted to his heirs, with his riches, then had we not been left to feel that although "prosperity may gain friends, it is adversity which tries them." It was unlike his usual prudence to let year after year glide away without making a will, which should secure his property to his wife and child; but who would have imagined when he bade us adieu on that eventful morning, in the enjoyment of perfect health, and in the meridian of life, to visit the metropolis for a few hours, that an accident would befall him, which, with scarcely a moment's warning, should summon *him* into the presence of his Maker, and deprive *us* of our best and dearest friend. Truly the ways of God are inscrutable—"they are past finding out." Still I would not murmur at the will of Heaven, for blest with such a mother as mine, can I be unhappy? Fortunately the property

settled on *her* at her marriage is safe from the grasp of our avaricious kinsman, and though insufficient to procure those superfluities to which we have been accustomed, yet enables us to live in comfortable independence. I should not thus have made myself the subject of this letter, had it not been to convince you that it is not moroseness, which makes me sometimes check those immoderate bursts of joy to which you occasionally give way, but proceeds merely from a desire that by preserving a calm and equable state of feeling, you should be prepared to meet those numberless crosses, which the child of affluence, as well as the child of indigence, must inevitably endure.

I will, however, change the subject, and write, if I can, in a strain more congenial to your mood.

I offer you my warmest congratulations (in which Wallace joins) at the return of your noble father, and much wish I could transport myself to Woodstock on Thursday to witness the meeting, and to console my dear mamma for your loss, as you must be aware, Merelina, that you are almost as dear to her as I am myself. Indeed, when I was a child I used to feel quite jealous, and to fancy you engrossed more of her thoughts than her own Agnes, but now, I can exactly enter into her feelings. She loved us both, but for you she felt the greatest anxiety. She knew that a day would arrive when she must resign her precious charge into the hands of a man, who having moved in the highest circles of fashion, and visited every court in Europe, was eminently qualified to judge of mind and manners, and who

would expect to find his daughter an elegant and accomplished girl ; truly, if the eye of friendship be not blinded, he will not be disappointed. Mamma also knew that she must render an account of her stewardship to one who searcheth the heart, and who penetrateth not only into the actions of men, but into the *motives* which induce *to* those actions ; she felt that she was entrusted with the care of a reasonable creature whose soul must live for ever in "bliss or woe immortal;" and that the character of the woman would in an immense degree depend upon the impressions of the child. The great responsibilities of the situation in which, at your papa's earnest request, she had placed herself, frequently led her to show for *you*, what in my childish days I was pleased to designate an undue partiality. And now, dear, that you are to be presented to the world, I can guess what she must feel, and would fain cheer her with my presence. I will not insult you so much as even to suspect that you will forget either of us, or fail to keep up a regular correspondence, for I know your affectionate heart, and am persuaded we shall always be remembered by you, and numbered among your dearest friends. I do not mean to trouble you in this letter with any more of my concerns, as I am sure your mind must be too much occupied with your own. As soon as the first emotions of pleasure are subsided, and you can collect your scattered thoughts, a letter will be welcomely received, and highly prized by

Your sincere friend,
AGNES.

LETTER III.

MRS. PONSONBY TO HER DAUGHTER AGNES.

Woodstock.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I cannot employ the solitary hours to which your temporary absence, and the loss of my protégé subject me, better than in writing you an account of the events of the last week—events which have excited in my mind many powerful sensations, and the recital of which may possibly prove interesting. You are aware of the arrival of Lord St. Clair I suppose, as I observed Merelina seated at her desk almost immediately after she had perused his letter, and upon enquiring to whom she was writing, she said “she was anxious to make you acquainted with her good news, in order that you might sympathise with her.” I replied, “that she was hardly in a fit state of mind to engage in such an occupation, for her spirits were elated so far beyond what was reasonable, that I was convinced the expressions she would use while under such excitement, would appear extravagant and absurd when she became more calm.” However, not being able to convince her, I suffered her to remain undisturbed, and retired to my own apartment. On the following morning, when we met at breakfast, the dear girl threw herself into my arms, and

weeping bitterly, declared she could not leave me, that hitherto she had thought only of the joy of meeting a beloved parent, but now that the hour was approaching when she must, for the first time, be separated from me; when she must bid adieu to her best and dearest friend, whom she loved so sincerely, and leave her grotto, her flowers, and all those innocent delights which had amused her leisure, and afforded her so much real pleasure, it was more than she could endure. She would ask Lord St. Clair to allow her to remain here, or to take me home with her. You, who know what strong feelings your friend possesses, and how little she has been accustomed to control them, will not be surprised when I tell you that it was long ere I could prevail on her to be composed. I remonstrated with her upon the impropriety, if not ingratitude, of meeting his Lordship in tears. I asked her if this total want of self government was to be the first proof she intended to give him of the fallacy of my plans, and by thus awakening feelings of a different nature, I succeeded in restoring her to greater equanimity. At two o'clock we partook of a cold luncheon; after which we attended to our toilette, and never did I see this charming girl look more sweetly interesting. She had arrayed herself in a clear white muslin dress, with no other ornament than a bandeau of pearls around her forehead. Her dark hair hanging in luxuriant tresses upon her shoulders, displayed to advantage a neck of snowy white, and the mixture of joy and sorrow which seemed blended in her soft blue eye, gave an almost angelic expression to her

countenance. I kissed her check, and told her Lord St. Clair could not fail to be pleased with her. As I spoke, we caught the sound of wheels rattling down the road. Merelina flew to the window; a handsome equipage stopped at the gate, and a tall fine-looking man, about forty years of age, alighted. In a moment the father and child were locked in each other's arms. I remained at a little distance, but as soon as his Lordship observed me, he stepped forward, and politely taking my hand, said, "It is impossible, my dear madam, adequately to express what I feel at the present moment, or to thank you, as I would wish, for the care you have taken of the tender nursling I brought you fifteen years ago. In truth, the bud is blown with such exuberant beauty, that I should not have recognised it, but for the striking resemblance to —," and then checking himself, "I hope, Merelina," said he, "you will ever regard both Mrs. Ponsonby and her daughter with the truest affection. Capt. Ponsonby was one of my most intimate friends, and had not his lady consented to take charge of you, I should have had no alternative but to place you at a fashionable school, where, probably, you might not have been very happy." I begged he would say no more, as our obligations were mutual. He had found a home for *his* child, and *I* a most intelligent and amiable companion for *mine*. His Lordship then kindly enquired after *you*, and upon my telling him you were staying with my sister, Mrs. Fitz Williams, he expressed much regret at not seeing you, but hoped on your return you would honor him with your company at Henley. Mere-

lina looked delighted, and, joining in his request, declared she should think every day an age till she saw you. I expressed my thanks, but said it was very uncertain how long you would be away, as I was anxious you should embrace the opportunity afforded you of seeing some of the beauties of your own country, many parts of which might vie in scenery with Italy and the south of France. To be sure, said I, I was one of those old-fashioned persons, who greatly disapproved of the present mania for sending young ladies on the continent, to acquire those manners which the naturally graceful and well-bred would not fail to possess if introduced into good society at home, and which the vulgar never *could* acquire, even by a continental tour. There was not a doubt in my own mind that more young people were ruined in this way than any other; that I had myself known the daughters of several distinguished families, who had left England modest, artless, and unaffected; but after two or three years' residence abroad, had returned, forward, conceited, and disagreeable, with the warm generous friendship of their nature exchanged for the studied softness of an Italian signora, the haughty airs of a Spanish donna, or the unpleasing levity of a Parisian coquette. Lord St. Clair smiled, and thought my reasoning excellent, but, as he said, "one might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion," he should like Merelina to visit the southern countries of Europe. I remarked that with her principles, and under the guidance of a watchful parent, she would probably receive no material injury, but that in general it was hazardous.

We continued discoursing upwards of an hour, when his lordship, turning to his daughter, begged she would take her leave of me for a short time; then, addressing me, "I hope, Mrs. Ponsonby," said he, "you will not refuse my request, to spend the summer with us at Henley. I shall esteem your company an honor conferred upon myself, and my daughter will, I know, be rejoiced to see you. In consideration of the *ennui* which a young lady would feel with no other companion than her father, I have invited the honourable Miss Josephine Charlton, whose exquisite beauty and fascinating manners render her the talk of the *beau monde*, to come immediately to our villa, and she has condescended to promise that early next week she will favor us. If you, madam, will accede to our united request, my travelling carriage shall be at your service as soon as you can arrange to leave Woodstock." I accepted this polite invitation, Agnes, for I felt more than I can describe at the idea of losing our dear girl. After many compliments from Lord St. Clair, and expressions of affection from his daughter, we bade each other farewell, anticipating a speedy re-union. I cannot tell you how much I miss you both; the place is not like the same; the flowers hang their heads as if quite neglected, poor little Chloë utters the most piteous cries, and everything wears an appearance of gloom. Were it not for the preparations I am engaged in making, I, too, should feel desolate. This morning I received some magnificent and costly presents from Lord St. Clair, accompanied by a very affectionate note from Merelina, begging my acceptance of them. I am rather surprised

this nobleman has never contracted a second marriage, for during his travels he must have been introduced to ladies of the first rank and fashion; but there has always appeared to me something excessively reserved and mysterious in his letters, and never, by any chance, has he made allusion to his late wife; it strikes me forcibly that all is not right, and that at some future period there will be a grand *éclaircissement*. May it prove to be nothing which will affect the happiness of his child. I must now conclude, hoping soon to receive a full account of all the adventures, incidents, &c. which may have befallen you, as it is almost needless to add that whatever concerns my dear girl, must be most intensely interesting to

Her own Mamma,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER IV.

AGNES PONSONBY IN REPLY.

Clifton Villa.

DEAR AND HONOURED MAMMA,

My last letter merely told you of my safe arrival, but I must now give you a description of this beautiful spot. Clifton, as its name implies, is built on an eminence, and the scenery is exquisitely

picturesque. When I first visited the St. Vincent Rocks, it was on one of those lovely evenings, which in our chill climate are so rare, and so ominously beautiful that they remind us of the hectic flush which tinges the cheek of consumption, and imparts so animated an appearance to the drooping frame as almost to persuade us no danger is to be apprehended. The sun was just sinking to rest in all its majesty; not a wave murmured of the beautiful river which flowed between those ranges of mountain lime-stone—not a breeze disturbed the stillness of the scene—all was calm. I gazed around me in silent admiration; my mind sank into a reverie; worldly cares were hushed, and feeling and fancy were awakened. "Is it possible," thought I, "that there exists the being so lost, so depraved, so insensate, as to behold nature arrayed in such a robe as this, and deny the existence of a God? Could any *but* a God have created such a world?" Reason, religion, all answered "No." And if so beautiful even now, what would it have been, had sin never entered? My thoughts then reverted to our first parents in their charming abode of Paradise—

"That wilderness of sweets,
Where nature played at will her virgin fancies,
Wild above rule or art."

That paradise where love, and peace, and harmony reigned undisturbed, and man, in the image of his Creator, dwelt the Sovereign Lord of all. Imagination then soared heavenward, and lost itself in contemplating

the height and depth, the length and breadth, of that amazing love, which induced the only begotten Son of God to suffer death, and such an ignominious death, for the sake of man, who had dared to dally with the tempter, till he disobeyed the *one only* command of his maker, and thereby entailed a curse upon himself and all his posterity. How long I should have remained thus absorbed, I cannot say, had not Wallace recalled my scattered thoughts by observing that there was every appearance of a thunder storm, and at the same time pointing out to me the Hotwell house, beautifully situated beneath the rocks, and looking on the Lower Avon. We descended by an easy serpentine path, but ere we reached the house, our fears were verified. Black gathering clouds darkened the scene, in a moment they burst, and the rain fell in torrents; the thunder roared, and the forked lightning glared through the trees. I clung closer to Wallace, but he bade me not be frightened, and sheltered me as well as he was able in a cavity of the rock. In solemn silence we listened to the awful roar, as it rolled along the huge masses of stone, and watched the rending heavens display through their crevices new streams of liquid fire. We did not move until the fury of the storm had abated, but as soon as we were able, we hastened along the banks of the river to Clifton Downs. The buildings about Clifton are elegant and commodious, and you ascend most of the different streets by flights of steps. The botanical features of the country are likewise very interesting to a young student like myself, as there are several hundred

specimens in the immediate neighbourhood, so you may expect to see some additions to my herbarium.

I am rejoiced at your determination to spend the summer at Henley, as I should not otherwise have liked to remain so long absent from home, and though no pleasure is comparable to that of enjoying your loved society, still now I know you will also be amongst friends I shall offer no objection to my aunt's earnest entreaty to accompany them in their intended excursion to Wales. Mrs. Fitz Williams is more like you, mamma, than any person I ever met with; she has just your easy manners, and your own kind heart. I was received most affectionately; many, very many enquiries were made after you, and much tender concern shown for you. Mr. Fitz Williams said he had not seen me since I was a rude, boisterous little creature of five years old, and could scarcely believe it possible I should have grown so sedate. Wallace introduced me to his two sisters, Julia and Emily; they are both pleasant girls, but Emily is decidedly my favourite. Neither of them play or sing, for my uncle says it is a complete waste of time for girls to sit strumming at the piano all day long, annoying the whole household with discordant sounds, but my aunt is passionately fond of music, and makes me frequently play and sing on the guitar, as there is no other instrument in the house. My cousin Julia is not pretty, but there is so much drollery about her, and she looks so good humoured, that she cannot fail to please one, yet she is too satirical and giddy in her manners. Emily, though the younger of the two, is much more thoughtful and

sedate, and I believe is to be married to a young doctor named Siddons, as soon as possible after our trip. Wallace is constantly urging me to consent, that the same day which unites Emily and Siddons, shall make me his wife, and if it *must* be so, dear mamma, I hope you will come to Clifton, and by your kind counsels, prepare me for the important change, which I cannot contemplate without experiencing much agitation of mind, believing, as I do, the connubial state to be one of extreme happiness or intense misery. I think we have every prospect of enjoying the former, for we are not acquaintances of a day; we have known each other many years, and when children, I think we used to try each other's temper in every possible way. I am happy to tell you my cousin has obtained the living of _____, worth about fifteen hundred a year, which, with his private property, will enable us to maintain a very tolerable establishment. He well knows *my* only dowry will be a heart devoted to his service, and with this I believe he is perfectly satisfied. I have been over the rectory house; it is prettily situated, but in rather bad repair.

I am most anxious to hear from Merelina, but suppose she is at present too much engaged to write. The day after to-morrow we cross the Severn to Cardiff, where I shall again write, should nothing unforeseen happen to prevent. Till then, dear Mamma,

Allow me to subscribe myself,

Your very affectionate daughter,

AGNES PONSONBY.

LETTER V.

MERELINA ST. CLAIR TO AGNES PONSONBY.

Henley.

MY DEAR AGNES,

A fortnight has elapsed since I last addressed you, and O what a fortnight it has been! In this short space of time how much has transpired, and into what amazement, joy, sorrow, and bewilderment has your poor friend been alternately thrown. I have so much to tell you that I scarcely know where or in what manner to commence. Suppose then I give you a regular detail of everything, from the day on which I left your mamma, and, if I am too prolix, you must let me know in your next letter; but I flatter myself the case will be far otherwise, and that you will kindly interest yourself about the concerns of one who loves you as a sister. Without further preface, then, let me tell you that, after a long ride, during which I had a great deal of general conversation with papa, we arrived at our villa, which is really a delightful place, and I believe Lord St. Clair has purchased it. It is built of stone, and situated in the midst of a beautiful lawn, interspersed with various sorts of shrubs; the centre is supported by a colonnade of elegantly carved pillars, and in the two front wings are two large windows of painted glass. Over the colon-

nade is a very large window of plate glass, filled with the most odoriferous plants. On the north side is a tastefully constructed aviary, and on the south, a green-house, containing some of the rarest exotics. The grounds are extensive, and laid out with decided taste. *Here* rivulets, whose limpid streams meander gracefully along; and *there*, fountains issuing from artificial rocks, diversify the scene, and render it an earthly paradise. Lord St. Clair appeared to witness the pleasure I manifested in observing the beauties which surrounded me, with emotion, and taking my hand he pressed it to his lips, saying, "And you, if you will, are to be the mistress here." "Does your Lordship imagine that I can wish for any other home?" I replied. "Shall it not be the first endeavour of my heart to render you happy, and to supply to you the place of my departed mother?" Upon this he turned pale, and changed the subject. I could not help thinking it strange, but, attributing his emotion to the faded, but not withered recollections of his wife, I forbore to make any remark, and used every art to restore him to gaiety. The following morning I was much surprised at receiving a summons to his study. I hastened to obey, and upon my entering papa rose, led me to a chair, and placing himself by my side, "Miss St. Clair," said he, "I have something of importance to communicate to you, and if you will favor me with your attention I shall be obliged. I fear what I am about to disclose will disturb the tranquillity of your mind, but the time has arrived when it is necessary you should be made acquainted with

the affairs of those most nearly related to you. The painful task devolves upon me, of informing you, that you are not, as you have hitherto supposed—a motherless girl. Lady St. Clair still lives."

I trembled violently, "What can you mean, my Lord," said I,—"Is it possible that you ——"

"Yes," exclaimed he, "it is not only possible, but too true that we have for nearly sixteen years been separated."

I was mute with astonishment, Agnes; I could not utter a syllable. My father proceeded, and, to conceal his emotion, leaned his elbow on the table, and covered his face with his hands.

"At the age of twenty-one, Merelina, finding myself in possession of a title, and an estate which brought me in a hundred thousand a year, I resolved to travel, less, I believe, from a wish to enrich my mind, than to be considered a man of fashion, for in the present day, no one is deemed fit to enter society till he has made a continental tour. The necessary preparations were made, and in a few weeks I had bid adieu to old England.

"It is not my present purpose to narrate all that befell me; suffice it to say, that, having travelled through Europe, I resolved to spend a short time in India. I soon set sail for Calcutta, and there I became acquainted with a General Rivington, who was a complete courtier, and a man of the world.

"It was not long before he introduced me to his ward, a lovely girl of sixteen, whose parentage he told me was high, and whose property was immense. She had been

confided to the guardianship of this gentleman and his lady, who considered that by endeavouring to establish her brilliantly in life, they were performing their duty. I saw Eleanor Maltravers, and admired her. I admired her, and in justice to myself, let me say, I *thought* I loved her. The extreme elegance of her person, and the vivacity of her manners, entirely fascinated me, and, without reflection, I yielded to the impulse of my passion, and made an open declaration of love. Guess then my feelings when she rejected me, saying we were both too young, and too slightly acquainted to think of being united, and moreover she said she was not altogether sure that she preferred me to any other. I was frantic. I flew to her guardian, complained of her insensibility, and vowed I would destroy myself, rather than it should be said I had lived to be refused by the first woman to whom I had condescended to offer myself. General Rivington went into a violent rage, said the girl was a fool, declared she *should* be my wife, and desired me to be composed. This was impossible, for every time I beheld Miss Maltravers the flame increased, and, unaccustomed as I had been to meet with the slightest opposition to my wishes, I could ill bear the neglect of one whom I blindly thought I adored. Months passed away and at length the threats of the General, and *my* ceaseless importunities, prevailed. Eleanor consented to become my bride, and in the excess of my joy I paid her so many attentions, and won so entirely upon her susceptible mind, that I believe she really loved me before we married.

"The wedding-day arrived, we were united, and whilst the delirium caused by such strong excitement lasted, we were happy, but alas! we soon discovered that our tastes were uncongenial, our opinions widely different on all subjects, but more particularly on religious matters, our tempers unsuitable, and our pursuits of an entirely opposite nature. Lady St. Clair was a Christian, not in name, but in principle, in thought, in word, in deed. *She* considered life should be spent in preparation for eternity; *I* regarded it as a season for enjoyment. *Her* pleasure consisted in relieving the wants of her fellow creatures; *mine*, in attending theatres, balls, and all other places of public amusement. In consequence of this opposition in sentiment, we were seldom together, and rarely entered into conversation. We did not quarrel, but it was evident to every one that we were not happy.

"In the course of time Lady St. Clair presented me with a lovely little girl, whom I named Merelina, after my own mother, and this seemed a bond of union between us for a while. Eleanor took advantage of this, and tried to convert me to her opinions, but I attributed her love of retirement to gloominess of disposition, and her stedfast pursuance of duty to obstinacy. She appeared hurt, and said she would do all, everything she could to please me, but she would not violate the commands of her God. I cursed religion, and declared that I would have nothing to do with it. Nearly two years passed thus, after your birth, and at last I began to talk of a separa-

tion. I told her she was not the woman of my choice, nor could I ever make her as happy as she deserved to be.

"Eleanor said that if I would seek for happiness where it was to be found, and for pleasure in the domestic circle, we might yet remain together, and be blessed. *I* did not think so; I was young, rich, and handsome; there was not in the circles of fashion and beauty which I frequented, *one* who would not gladly, proudly, have accepted me as a suitor. Many years were in all probability allotted me on earth, and were *they* to be passed in dreary seclusion, and acts of self-denial? No, I resolved, at all risks, to enjoy what the world could offer, and discovered, when alas! too late, that my wife was the object of my *admiration*, not my *love*. Was it *possible* to love her, when every action of her pure and holy life, contrasted with the irregularities of mine, condemned me, and spake more powerfully to my conscience than I desired. To me the pleasures of the world seemed worth pursuing, and if this were an illusion, it was a pleasing one, which I did not wish to be destroyed. I reflected for some time, but the longer I did so, the more was I convinced that we were altogether unfit for each other, and I told Eleanor I was determined. I wished her to remain in the house where she was, and in every way to maintain the situation becoming her rank. I said I was willing to settle upon her whatever she might think proper to demand, but that I should leave the country, and spend the next few years in travelling. Lady St. Clair said

her own fortune was more than sufficient to satisfy her wants, but I insisted upon purchasing the estate for her on which she lived. The next enquiry, Merelina, was respecting you. I remarked that, during the life of both, either would be precluded from contracting another marriage, consequently *you* must be sole inheritor of our immense possessions: as such I was of opinion that you ought to receive a superior education, and for this purpose I said I should myself take you to England, and select a proper person for this important office.

"I shall never forget the agony of your mother as she listened to this arrangement: big tears of anguish rolled down her cheeks, and I was so much affected that I believe I should have yielded to leave you under her protection, had I not at that very juncture heard that Captain Ponsonby, one of my most intimate friends, had died very suddenly without a will, and that in consequence of this neglect, his wife and child, though not entirely unprovided for, would be compelled greatly to diminish their establishment. I was also told that it was the intention of his widow to take the charge of some gentleman's or nobleman's daughter, and retire with her and her own little girl into the country, where she could devote herself to their education undisturbed. Could anything have been more à propos? She was precisely the person I wanted, for I really loved you with all a father's fondness, and was anxious you should be taken care of. I should much have preferred leaving you with your mother, but from my earliest childhood I had been taught that religion was only intended

for the wretched, the morose, and the disappointed. I believed the language of scripture to be figurative, and I could not help thinking that in reality there was no such place of torment as the bible described. I feared lest you should be impressed with my wife's enthusiastic views, and therefore did I resolve to place you with Mrs. Ponsonby. I wrote to her immediately, settled everything satisfactorily to myself, acquainted Lady St. Clair with my proceedings, and in two months left Calcutta. To describe our parting would only distress you; suffice it to say that we entered into an agreement by which at the age of seventeen you were empowered to choose for yourself your future home, and it was likewise settled that you should correspond with your mother as soon as you attained a reasonable age. The latter part of this agreement has not, as you know, been fulfilled, for I did not choose that any but myself should reveal this sad tale. It was my intention to have visited England some years ago, but circumstances prevented my doing so, until weeks, months, and years have glided away, and you are now on the verge of that age, when you are to be considered your own mistress. I cannot —"

Here, Agnes, I could contain myself no longer. I threw myself at his feet. "Oh! suffer," said I, "that a child should intercede for an injured mother, suffer me to be the means of re-uniting you, and place me not in so terrible, so awful a situation, as to be compelled to judge between two parents, who ought to be equally dear."

"Miss St. Clair," said my father, "what you require is impossible—the breach is irreparable—we could not be happy. No," exclaimed he, while the deepest agitation was visible in every feature, "no,—sixteen years have served to convince me that Eleanor is right, *if* there be indeed any hereafter;—sixteen years have proved that mutability is stamped on all terrestrial things; but they have rendered us more unfit than ever for each other's society. I still believe that God is too merciful to punish man eternally, nor can I think that he requires such very strict obedience to his will. He created us for his pleasure, and surely he will not destroy us for our slight offences, but I must leave you, my child, I must leave you to your own reflections. By the first packet that arrives from Calcutta you will receive a letter from Lady St. Clair, and during the time that must necessarily intervene, ere you come to any determination respecting the course you will pursue, I trust you will endeavour to make yourself happy, and consider yourself sole mistress here. I shall not attempt to influence you in your decision. If it is your mother's wish that you should go to Calcutta, and you concur in it I *must* submit, but if, on the contrary, you remain with me, I need hardly say how proud I shall be to introduce you as my daughter.

"I have invited the Honourable Miss Charlton to spend some time with you; you will find her a lively and agreeable companion. She will arrive here on Monday to dinner, and I shall invite a few other friends to meet her. Concluding that it will be more pleasant

to you to remain alone to-day, I will not longer intrude, but trust, my Merelina," and he kissed my cheek, "you will endeavour to regain your composure by to-morrow."

I bowed assent (for my heart was too full for utterance), and retired to my own apartment, where I indulged in a copious flood of tears, which somewhat relieved me. I tried to think how I ought to act, but I found it impossible. Could I help loving, adoring my mother, when even her husband, who owned he disliked her, could speak so highly of her? Was it not natural I should wish to see her, to live with her? On the other hand, had not my father manifested the most tender affection for me, had he ever refused a single request, and had I not been taught to revere him?

I considered that my parents deserved pity rather than blame; that, young and inexperienced, they had acted imprudently, but then they had had no one to guide or advise either. Passion, not reason, had influenced them. I *could* not, I *did* not approve of my papa's sentiments on religion; I knew mamma was right, but what should I do? I resolved to wait until the expected letter should arrive, which I hoped would contain salutary advice. Thus did the whole day pass till, wearied and harassed in mind and body, I threw myself on my couch, and for a time forgot my sorrows in sleep—that "parenthesis of human woe," as Johnson so aptly and elegantly designates it.

I met Lord St. Clair the next day with a cheerful countenance; he kissed me, and seemed much pleased. Nothing particular occurred until the Monday, when

papa requested I would be in readiness to receive my guest. I made many enquiries about her, but the only reply I could obtain was that "she was a charming girl." Guess then my feelings when I describe our first interview. I was seated in the breakfast parlour, when his Lordship entered and introduced a young lady, apparently about twenty-two years of age, tall, splendidly erect, with large dark eyes, whose expression was haughtiness itself, a row of teeth like pearls, and a countenance strikingly handsome. I flew to embrace her with all the warmth of affection I have been accustomed to manifest towards you, but was soon checked by her exclaiming in an affected tone of voice—

"Pray excuse me, Miss St. Clair, but I detest kissing. I never could endure it when a child, and really these tender salutations are so overpowering when one feels fatigued. The journey has half killed me, I shall not be myself for a month. Bless me," said she, viewing herself in a mirror, "I am really quite a fright, so disfigured with the dust and wind. Pray allow me to be shown to a dressing-room."

I rang a bell, and a servant conducted her to the apartment which had been prepared for her.

In about two hours she made her appearance, and certainly looked very lovely: her dress was superb. I expressed a hope that she felt better, but she complained of an intolerable head-ache, and, turning to papa, said, "Have the goodness, my Lord, to give me that smelling bottle," pointing to a very handsome one on my work table, "I quite forgot my vinaigrette. I declare I shall

be utterly unable to make any exertion to-day. I hope your lordship does not expect a large party this evening." "Only Sir Henry Beaumont, Colonel Dalglish, Lord and Lady Selby, and Miss Montague," said papa, "but I trust Miss Charlton will, *sans cérémonie*, do what is perfectly agreeable to herself whilst she honors us with her company, and join our parties or not, as she feels inclined."

The young lady bowed politely, but added that "if the conversation took a sprightly turn, and there were any *characters* amongst the guests, she might be able to survive through the evening."

"Colonel Dalglish is quite a *character*," I assure you, said papa, then, turning to me, "he is a distant relation of ours, very rich, and a bachelor."

"Oh! I am delighted," said Josephine, "is he an oddity, or a wit, or a *bas-bleu*, or a miser, or ——"

"Quite an oddity," interrupted Lord St. Clair, and delights in being considered so; and he entertains very old-fashioned opinions."

"Charming. I love eccentricities, and now for this Sir Henry Beau——, but that is his carriage driving up the avenue, I am convinced, and there he sits as large as life."

In a few minutes a gentleman who looked a perfect "prince of coxcombs" was ushered into the room, and shortly after appeared Lord and Lady Selby, and this said Colonel. I will describe *him*; he is tall, miserably thin, and pale looking; the very *fuc simile* of what I should fancy Shakspeare's apothecary. After shaking

hands with Lord St. Clair, he fixed his eyes intently, first upon Miss Charlton, then on myself, and after gazing at us for some minutes, "Hem!" said he, "and which of these ladies is your daughter?" Papa took my hand, and leading me to him, said, "This, Sir, is Miss St. Clair; she is at present very young, and on account of my peculiar circumstances, introduced rather abruptly into society, but I trust she will be able to acquitted herself in a manner not unworthy of her."

I blushed deeply, for I felt the eyes of all were upon me, expressed much pleasure in seeing any friends of his Lordship's at Henley, and hoped that although not personally acquainted with any one present, they would meet with every attention, and consider themselves as welcome guests.

"Hem," said the Colonel, "she is what I call a pretty looking girl, too, St. Clair, mind you don't lose her. And who is that lady?" again looking at Josephine.

"I, Sir, am the eldest daughter of Lord William Charlton, of Charlton Hall, and have just taken possession of my property left me by my uncle, late Governor of Van Diemen's Land. Are you satisfied, Sir?"

"Perfectly, madam."

"I should think, Sir, it was unnecessary to describe my person, for you seem to have examined it most minutely. Pray can you tell whether my eyes are blue or black?"

"Hem! an oddity, truly."

"Two oddities together, don't you think so, Sir?"

During this conversation I had seated myself near Lady Selby, an amiable and interesting looking woman, who seemed to feel for the awkwardness of my situation, and as far as possible to relieve it. When dinner was announced, Lord Selby offered me his arm, Sir Henry Beaumont walked up to Josephine, Colonel Dalglisht to Lady Selby, and papa led to the dining-room Miss Montague, a maiden lady about —, but I know these ladies do not like their age mentioned, so I will charitably forbear guessing at her's. Lord S. conversed a great deal with me. I think he is a sensible, well-informed man, and I like both him and his lady exceedingly. I have received a pressing invitation to spend some time with them.

During the evening, music was proposed. Miss Charlton played and sung an Italian air in very good style, but Sir Henry quite destroyed the effect by his constant exclamations of "beautiful," "admirable," "surpassing Malibran herself," and many other compliments equally *outré*, to all of which she appeared perfectly indifferent.

Several times in the course of the evening did he endeavour to enter into conversation with me, but his foppish manners so completely disgusted me, that I only answered by monosyllables, resolved that he should see all girls are not so weak and frivolous, or so fond of flattery, as men are apt to imagine. I suppose he concluded that I was either dumb, or insensible, for he soon abandoned me for the *naïve* and loquacious Josephine. At the Colonel's request I played some favorite Scotch

airs on the harp. "Hem," said he, "you have a taste for music; have you been much to the Opera?" "No," said I, "I have not yet frequented any public places of amusement, but I have been provided with excellent masters."

"You must be delighted at the thought of *coming out* this winter," said Miss Charlton, "I really congratulate you, for I well remember my own feelings on the same occasion, two years ago, but then, to be sure, few girls are made to study as closely as I was. Mamma was determined *I* should be proficient in *every thing*. I had one governess to teach me History and Geography, and so on, and another to teach me how to behave in company; I had masters for Drawing, and Painting, and Music, and Singing, and Drilling, and French, and Italian, and German, and Spanish; and I was obliged to attend Lectures on Chemistry, and Astronomy, and Botany, and Philosophy, and Anatomy, and Natural History; and I had a public speaker attend me twice a week to teach me Elocution, and ——"

"Pray," said the Colonel, "did you ever have a master to teach you the art of being silent?"

"Dear! no, Sir," said Josephine, somewhat piqued, but not at all abashed, "unfortunately I never could talk sufficiently, so it was unnecessary."

"Hem!" girls used to be taught modesty when you and I were young, madam," said Colonel Dalglish, turning to Miss Montague.

"Indeed, Sir," replied this lady, drawing up her long neck to its *ne plus ultra*, and assuming an air of

girlishness, "indeed I do not know that there is difference enough between my age and Miss Charlton's, for any material alteration to have taken place in manners."

"Intolerable!" whispered Sir Henry, "for a starched up old maid of fifty-five to compare herself with so young and lovely a creature. Intolerable! I repeat, Miss Charlton, I would resent it."

"Let the poor lady enjoy the delusion, pray Sir Henry, it were cruel to undeceive her."

"Really, Miss Montague," said the Colonel, "I beg your pardon, but one is apt to think only of one's *own* age, and I must say that forty years ago, when I was a young man, girls didn't talk as they do now. *My* mother's maxim was, that 'when we were in company we should be *seen* but not *heard*.' "

"Dear! how cruel," exclaimed Josephine, "then I suppose she never allowed you to make love to a young lady! How *could* you be a bachelor? they are generally so disagreeable. I think it such a pity you never married; you would have brought up your children so well."

"Hem! I was near being entrapped once, Miss Charlton, but I changed my mind."

"How I should like to hear your love tale! What sort of a lady was your intended, Sir?"

"Perhaps at some future time I may inform you, but it is painful to take a retrospective view of times, when we were the chief objects of regard, and feel that *now* we are unsought and uncared for;" and his eye

involuntarily glanced towards Miss Montague, as if he fancied her in the same forlorn situation.

"I do believe the Colonel is not quite callous now," whispered Sir Henry.

"Sympathy," answered Josephine, "may perhaps incline the hearts of the Colonel and Miss Montague towards each other. I protest I will use my endeavours."

After much frivolous discourse of this description Lord St. Clair appeared fearful lest some offence should be taken, and adroitly changed the subject of conversation, so that we parted very amicably at an early hour.

The two ensuing days were spent in riding about the country, and giving orders to milliners, &c. To-morrow we dine at Lord Selby's, but I can write no more, for a servant has just brought me in a letter with the Calcutta post-mark. My hand trembles so that I can scarcely guide my pen. As soon as I have perused it, I shall enclose a copy of it, and hope you will not fail to write immediately.

A hasty adieu! from

Your ever affectionate

MERELINA.

LETTER VI.

LADY ST. CLAIR TO HER DAUGHTER.

Calcutta.

MY OWN BELOVED CHILD,

Ere you receive this letter you will have been made acquainted with facts that must have awakened many painful sensations in your young mind. Would that I could spare your feelings, but it is not right you should any longer remain in ignorance of your real situation. *Why* the existence of your mother should have been concealed from you so long, seems almost inexplicable. That Lord St. Clair looks to you as the hope of his expiring house, and wishes to incline you to *him*, I am aware, but surely it was not necessary to rob me of the only pleasure life could yield—that of aiding, by my precepts and advice, to form the mind of my own loved infant. I could not dispute the right of your papa to claim you, but when I clasped you to my aching breast, and, in all the agony of woe, bade you perhaps an eternal adieu, who, but a mother, can comprehend my grief? Oh! Merelina, I thought I should have sunk under that trial. I had borne with the contempt, the dislike, the ridicule, of my husband with patience; I had heard him talk of leaving the wife who *adored* him, without murmuring at the divine will—but

when the child was to be taken from me, who would have been a solace to my widowed heart, and in educating whom, my sorrows, if not forgotten, would have been soothed,—when I was told that she was to be entrusted to *one* whose principles, character, and views I was wholly unacquainted with, I could bear it no longer. I wept, I pleaded, I insisted, and at last wrung from your father a promise, that when you came into possession of the property left you by your paternal grandfather, which was to be at the age of seventeen, you should choose for yourself your future home, and likewise that I should write to you as soon as you were able to read my letters. Years glided away, and when I wrote to his Lordship to remind him of this promise, and to request the address of the lady with whom you were placed, he refused it, saying it was his intention to visit England shortly, and that he would then reveal everything to you himself. Alas! my child, I guessed his motives; he feared lest I should impress your young and ductile mind with those religious truths which he considered fanatical, and *therefore* did he postpone the grant as long as possible; but Oh! tell me, have my prayers been offered up for you in vain? Are you a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, or are you still in bondage to the “Prince of the power of the air.” Have you humbled yourself at the foot of the cross, and pleaded for pardon, for the sake of that Saviour who died for you, or are you living in proud rejection of his proffered mercy? Are you convinced of your utter inability to save yourself, or do you boast

of your morality, your virtue, your charity, and think that these can appease your offended Maker? Have you pondered over those words of scripture, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Perhaps you think this a hard sentence—it *would* be, were ye not forewarned. Oh! Merelina,—to perish,—to die,—not once, but eternally. I beseech you, perish not. "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto him, and have life."

Write to me, dear girl, open your whole soul to your mother, who could depart in peace, were she only assured that you were numbered among the happy few who are travelling to Zion's Gate. "Be watchful! be vigilant! your enemy, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking to devour you." There *is* one above who will guide you, if you will only trust in him; remember you have no mother near you, to warn you of approaching danger. Had *I* not been deprived of mine, I had not now, perhaps, been a broken-hearted woman. Left to my own judgment, in an hour of strong temptation, I dared to disobey the divine command, and consented to become the wife of a man, who was yet "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity," but Merelina, I knew not then how deep-rooted were his prejudices, or how false his views, and I fondly hoped I should possess influence enough over him to persuade him to relinquish the unsubstantial pleasures of the world, for the pure, unfading joys of religion. Mistaken, presumptuous girl that I was! I was not sufficiently acquainted with the human heart,

and its natural aversion to holiness, for *I*, and a brother named Alphonso, two years my senior, were the only and beloved children of the Rev. Daniel Maltravers, then Bishop of Calcutta. We had been nurtured in the principles, and cradled in the precepts, of the Established Church, and from our earliest childhood it had been instilled into us that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Oh! *what* a man was your grandfather! Shall I describe him? It is beyond my power to give you a just idea of him. His figure was tall and commanding, and his features strikingly beautiful: the expression of his countenance resembled the light and shadow on the mountain's brow; now beaming with love that spoke unutterable things—*anon* depressed by sadness at the recollection of indwelling sin; and then his sweet voice—could you have listened to it, when in the language almost of inspiration he would address the crowds who flocked around him, and make them tremble and smile, weep and rejoice, by turns—could you have watched him from house to house, administering consolation to the dejected, hope to the desponding, and gentle reproof to the careless—and then could you have followed him to his home, and seen him with his loved partner striving to make religion attractive to those children who almost worshipped him, you would have exclaimed, "Truly this is a righteous man." Such happiness as we then enjoyed could not be of long duration: we loved the creature *too* well; we forgot the *Creator*, and we were to be made to feel that "man is like a thing of nought, passing

away like a shadow." Disease entered our dwelling; this revered parent was the first who fell a victim to the ravages of yellow fever, and ere we had time to recover the shock, our dear mamma was taken ill, and followed her sainted consort to the tomb. One grave contained their relics, and their happy spirits, united in every thought and feeling whilst they lived, could not exist apart. They flew together to the portals of Heaven's gate, and waited to hear the joyful sentence, "Come, blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." I was at that time fourteen years of age, Alphonso sixteen. Our feelings can better be imagined than described; our loss was irreparable, and we knew it. Many months elapsed before we could in any degree regain our composure, and to this hour, I cannot think of what we then endured without shedding tears.

The only relation we had in India was an aunt, who had married a General Rivington, and they were quite people of fashion. To *them* we were confided, not because they were such people as our dear parents approved of for our guardians, but because the suddenness with which they were summoned out of time, gave them no opportunity to make other arrangements. Alphonso had always been intended for the army, and as soon as he had overcome his first sorrow, he purchased a commission, and sought to banish recollections of the past, by fighting for his king and country, and acquiring renown. Not so his unhappy sister. Thrown into the society of those whom I could not love, and obliged to

hear all that I had been taught to regard as sacred, made a subject of ridicule; cast upon the world without *one* true friend, and every hope withered in the dust, will you be much surprised that I bestowed myself too prematurely in marriage. The consequences are well known to you, and to guard you from a similar error must now be my peculiar care.

I shall write no more, my child, until I have heard from you, but I shall wait for a letter with the greatest anxiety, as then, and not till then, shall I be able to advise you.

With many prayers for your welfare, I subscribe myself
Your affectionate, though far distant Mother,
ELEANOR ST. CLAIR.

LETTER VII.

MERELINA TO LADY ST. CLAIR.

Henley.

DEAREST MAMMA,

How little did I think a few weeks ago that any one existed whom I could address by so tender a title! How often have I beheld others under the protection of this, their best earthly friend, and *almost* envied them; and how have I mourned in secret over my supposed loss!

Ah! none but those who are deprived of the blessing can comprehend its value; none but those who have felt the need of a mother's counsel, can know how precious it is. Could some undutiful children who disregard a mother's admonitions, and turn a deaf ear to her entreaties, form the slightest idea of what they will feel, when she no longer lives, and they are left in loneliness of heart to think and act for themselves, with none to sympathise in their griefs, or rejoice in their joys, they would estimate the gift as it *deserves* to be estimated.

I, mamma, have experienced all this, for you have been dead to *me*; and now, like the angels in heaven over a repenting sinner, I feel more intense love for you, than if I had always known you.

I have perused your letter over and over again, and have wept tears of gratitude, of love, of joy, and of indignation. O would that I resembled you, then indeed should I be happy, but I fear I am but half a Christian. I could not have borne what you have, without repining, nor could I have endured such treatment from a husband. When I think over your injuries, I am ready to cry out for vengeance, and almost to feel dislike towards Lord St. Clair, but then again when I remember how kind he has been to me, and how deeply my affections have been fixed on him from my infancy: when I hear him speak of *you* in the highest terms of commendation, e'en though he treats you thus, my heart relents, and I only regret that destiny did not appoint to each of you a happier lot.

I am, however, quite decided to dwell with you, my dear, neglected parent, if it meets with your approbation. Let me come to soothe your griefs, and cheer your drooping spirits: let me sit at your feet, and learn those lessons of heavenly wisdom which have taught you to bear the ills of life with such resignation; let me try and imitate your virtues; let me prove how dear you are to your Merelina.

You ask me to open my whole soul to you, and I will obey. I will tell you how weak my faith is, how wavering my mind.

When I was taken from you, I was happily placed under the charge of a most excellent woman,—such a woman as even *you* would approve of. I have been treated by her with every kindness and indulgence; she has watched over me with the anxiety and tenderness of a parent, and if the heart could repose unlimited confidence in, or open its secret workings to any *but* a mother, I might have done so to her. She has set before me the superior advantages of a religious life; she has told me of the perishing nature of sublunary things; she has taught me the necessity of self government, and the duty of self examination, and had I not been "born in sin, and conceived in iniquity," my stubborn heart must long, ere this, have yielded to her persuasions.

Yet do not from this think me insensible. I know that if I "gain the whole world, and lose my own soul, it will profit me nothing," and I hope before I die to be such a christian as *you* are, mamma.

But it is so difficult to be truly religious, my

temptations are so numerous, and my will so rebellious, that the more I strive after perfection, the further I seem from it. If I were with you, perhaps I should become like you. O grant me permission. Papa says he shall not attempt to influence me; it will be very, *very* hard to leave *him*, and will require all my fortitude, but yet I feel that if a child must choose between her parents; if it cannot be that they dwell in sweet harmony together, sharing each other's joys and sorrows—O, then, tis to a *mother* she would cling. What a trying situation is mine! but I shall not acquaint Lord St. Clair with my determination until I have heard again from you. With your letter in my bosom, and your counsels in my heart,

I remain, my dear Mamma,

Your dutiful and affectionate child,

MERELINA.

LETTER VIII.

HON. MISS CHARLTON TO THE BARONESS DE ROSNY.

Henley.

DEAR ALMIRA,

Never did I see the man whom I thought it worth my while to try and conquer, till I came to Henley-upon-Thames, and here I *have* seen such an one.

You start at this confession, and exclaim with something like curiosity—"What sort a creature can *he* be, whom Josephine Charlton could not conquer without an effort! Well may you be surprised that *I*, who have only to smile, and crowds of admirers are at my feet; to frown, and hundreds are rendered miserable; *I*, who have had as many duels fought on my account as there are days in the week, and have remained alike indifferent to the vanquisher and the vanquished—that I should now "stoop to conquer." Yet it is true that I have met with one whom I love, but who at present dares to refuse me his homage. Never before did I doubt my power, for I am rich, young, and beautiful as the rising sun, the talk of the beaux, the envy of the belles, and the centre of attraction in the vast metropolis, yet it seems as if I could make no impression on the mind of this insensate. It was when dining a few days ago at a Lord Selby's that I first met Sir Alfred Villiers. He is about twenty-two years of age, the finest figure I ever beheld, and a perfect Adonis. His face is of an oval form, forehead high, eyes more piercing than even my own, and his mouth exquisitely formed. His countenance is intelligent, his voice melodious, and his manners engaging when he *chooses*, but he is so awfully grave, and when he speaks every one but myself listens with the most profound attention. *I* pretend to be indifferent and unconcerned, but I fear this will not do, as he seems rather to admire Miss St. Clair. He does not say so, but I have observed his eyes fixed intently on her several times, and this I do not mean to submit to.

She is a sweet, interesting looking girl, and extremely graceful in all her movements, but I will not be eclipsed by *her*. I already hate her, because I fear she will be a rival.

Report says, this Sir Alfred is very religious, goes to church every Sunday, and always has prayers twice a day at home; now if this be true, I shall not suit him, and Merelina is quite of a serious turn, so she will have the advantage of me, but I have lost my heart irrecoverably, and will do anything, aye, even play the hypocrite, to win the object of my regard. Do you blame me? Surely not. It will never do for the accomplished and admired daughter of Lord William Charlton to pine away—the victim of unrequited love; no, this would be too mortifying.

You will think me half mad, and so I am. I wish I had never come to Henley, or else that the troublesome little urchin had never darted his arrow into my heart. I always thought myself proof against him, but ah me!

“Little Love is a mischievous boy,

And he uses the heart like a toy, la, la, la.”

What provokes me the most in this Sir Alfred, is the perfect *nonchalance* with which he answers me when I address him. He could not appear more calm and collected if he were talking to his great grandmother, and then he converses about such *prosish* things.

He asked me the other evening when we had retired to the drawing-room, if I were fond of reading?

I answered, “Passionately so.”

Then he wished to know what authors I perused

with the greatest pleasure. Here I was puzzled, for you know I never read any thing but a few of the best novels, and occasionally glance over one or two of the periodicals. However, I did not mean to be overcome, so I said I was very poetical, admired "Byron" exceedingly, and perused all Walter Scott's works with much pleasure.

"Ah," he replied, whilst one of the most charming smiles I ever beheld irradiated his manly countenance, "as works of fiction, Walter Scott's stand unequalled, and no mind capable of feeling can read Byron's *Corsair*, *Bride of Abydos*, and numerous other poems, without being struck with his genius, but still I should imagine such books as these were read only when the mind, wearied with severer study, required recreation."

"Certainly not," said I, "are you fond of music, Sir Alfred?" for I thought it better to change the subject.

"Yes, Miss Charlton, '*music* has charms to soothe the savage breast,' but I am rather fastidious, and only like the very best: I think sacred music more beautiful than any other."

"Do you prefer vocal or instrumental?"

"It is difficult to determine; a good voice is entirely the gift of nature, and when possessed is infinitely pleasing, but any person who has perseverance, and the advantage of good masters may learn to play sufficiently to amuse others, which *is*, or *ought* to be, their object in learning."

Plague take your sentimentality, thought I, but nothing daunted by it, "Shall I sing to you, Sir

Alfred," said I, "Lord Selby appears to have a beautiful instrument."

"It will afford me real pleasure, can I place your music?"

"If you please, what should you like? This is pretty," and I took up a song entitled "Sappho at her loom."

You may rest assured, my dear Almira, I made every effort to display my naturally fine voice, but he actually suffered me to sing it through, without paying me one compliment, or expressing the slightest admiration, further than saying "It is a pretty plaintive air."

"Poor Sappho! don't you think she was to be pitied?" asked I.

"For what, Miss Charlton?"

"Why surely you know that she threw herself headlong from the Tarpeian rock, because,"—

"Because, madam, she was too weak to try and overcome a passion, the indulgence of which, under her circumstances, could only be productive of misery."

"You talk like a Stoic, Sir Alfred; do you belong to the sect?"

"No," said he, scarcely able to resist laughing at the pertness of my question, "I do not, but I think we ought to remember that the same hand which appoints our daily bread, appoints likewise our daily crosses, and therefore we should bear them with resignation."

"Excellent sentiments," said I, "but I dare say you have never been tried much yet. What can they be doing at the other end of the room? Shall we go and see?"

He offered me his arm, and upon approaching we found Sir Henry Beaumont (a young nobleman who has already professed himself my slave) engaged with two or three young ladies, in the puerile amusement of telling fortunes by means of a little fortune teller on the cheffonier. Lord St. Clair and Lady Selby were playing a game at chess, and Merelina was looking on.

"Dear! how absurd," said I, "pray, Sir Henry, what have you been doing all the evening? I declare I have not spoken to you since dinner."

"No, charming girl," he exclaimed, rising, and offering me a seat, "*you* have been engaged in most intellectual conversation with Sir Alfred, whilst *I* have been left to languish here neglected."

"Now really that's very fine, but as *you* ought to have sought *me* if you desired my company, you have no one to blame but yourself, and I shall inflict a penance upon you for your negligence."

"No penance can be too severe," said he, "and to gain absolution, I will willingly submit to."

"To hear your fortune told, *pro bono publico*, and I am sure it will be every thing that is bad. Do lend me the book: now listen; twist the old woman round; see where her wand points. Capital! you are to have a wife who will be the plague of your life."

"That I shall not mind if she is only handsome."

"Handsome indeed! destiny decrees you a cross, ugly looking creature, with a turned up nose, red hair, and a mouth as large as an oven door."

"Good heavens! Miss Charlton, I would rather die a bachelor."

"Hark, now! you are to meet with a severe disappointment, and this will serve you right, you are so fickle; but I declare I'll not speak to you any more for a month."

"Come, Sir Alfred," said I, rising and taking an elegantly bound volume in my hand, "let us look at these prints, and leave this stupid party to themselves."

"Shall I not be an intruder?" asked he, "you have been finding fault with Sir Henry, when I, in reality, am the person to blame. It is I who have engrossed your attention."

"O pray," said I, "do not think me in earnest. Sir Henry is nothing to me, but one *must* say foolish things sometimes. You think me too volatile, Sir Alfred," said I, observing him frown, though I confess to you, Almira, that his *frowns* please me more than other men's *smiles*; they give such a haughty expression to his features, that he looks quite irresistible.

"Miss Charlton is her own mistress," said he gravely, "and of course will pursue what line of conduct she pleases."

"No indeed, I assure you I *have* no line of conduct. I always act and speak according to the impulse of the moment. I wish I *could* think, and then I should never say what is wrong. But it must be a dreadful bore always to reflect upon what one is going to say. Do you always do so yourself?"

"Not always," said he, "but when we remember 'that

for every idle word we must give account,' it should make us careful."

"Certainly, I did not think of that, but really you would make me quite good, if I were to converse much with you. Shall you be at the *déjeuner* on Thursday?"

"Most likely, I have received a pressing invitation from my uncle."

"Your uncle! is the Marquis Raimondi your uncle?"

"He is, and this *fête champêtre* is in honor of my cousin Claudine having attained her twenty-first year. She is an amiable girl, and wishes this day to be a season of rejoicing to her poor as well as her rich neighbours. Marquees are erected in the park, and a dinner is to be provided for all the villagers: those who take pleasure in such things will be able to witness the imposing scene. A *déjeuner à la fourchette* will be set out on the lawn for the visitors, after which they will disperse till the evening, when there will be a ball."

Now, my dear Almira, would not any one but Sir Alfred Villiers have taken this opportunity of engaging me for a partner, but no, not a word about it. However, I do not mean to despair; I will try a different line of conduct on Thursday, if I can, for his favor is become essential to my happiness. I am sure I must have wearied you to death, so good bye, for the present.

Pray remember me to your *caro sposo*, who I hope by this time is convalescent, and when you can spare time, write me a long letter, and advise me how to manage this obdurate—but too fascinating man.

Your restless and almost unhappy friend,
JOSEPHINE CHARLTON.

LETTER IX.

AGNES PONSONBY TO MERELINA ST. CLAIR.

Llandillo.

MY DEAR MERELINA,

It is the hour of midnight! a solemn silence pervades all around me; my companions and fellow travellers are gone to repose their wearied limbs, and to recruit their almost exhausted strength in sleep, but it is so many weeks since I have written to my friend, that I am resolved no longer to delay the fulfilment of a pleasurable duty, which *want of time alone* has hitherto prevented me from doing.

My uncle has made a determination to see everything worthy of notice in Wales, and as the period for our excursion is rather limited, in consequence of Wallace being anxious to commence his labours in the village of ——, we have literally not a moment's rest, but are hurried from place to place with as great rapidity as horses, carriages, and boats can convey us. It is now about three weeks since we crossed the Severn to Cardiff, which is situated on the river Taff, and over which is a bridge of five arches.

The principal attraction in architecture is its castle, so renowned in history as the place where the unfortunate Robert, Duke of Normandy, was detained prisoner for

twenty-eight years, by that brother whom *he* had formerly treated with such magnanimity.

O ambition! restless ambition! what crimes wilt thou not lead us to commit! To satisfy *thee*, a brother consents to take an unoffending brother captive;—to deprive him of his friends—his patrimony—and worse than all—his freedom;—to stifle those feelings of compassion which *must* be indigenous to every human breast;—to compel his unhappy victim to drag on a weary existence in a dismal dungeon, where the rays of the sun scarcely ever penetrated, and where even *hope* could not have found admittance, to cheer for *one* short moment the mind of the royal prisoner. Yes, all this was done to gratify ambition, and to secure to the victorious Henry the possession of the two powerful estates of England and Normandy.

Alas! how depraved is the heart of man! and then, (strange laxity in morals!) the founding of an Abbey was considered a sufficient atonement for the perpetration of crimes so heinous. In spite, however, of all the innovations which this noble castle has sustained, you may still discover the remnants of its ancient grandeur. The western front has a remarkably fine appearance as you approach the town, and the fine level lawn, and terrace adorned with shrubs, form a striking contrast to the surrounding buildings. You are doubtless aware that it is now a seat of the Marquis of Bute.

From Cardiff we proceeded to Cowbridge, where nothing very interesting was to be seen, but a few miles to the west of it, at a short distance from the shore, is

Barry Island. This is frequented as a watering place during the summer months, but contains only *one* house, which is fitted up to accommodate twelve persons. At the southern part of the island is a fine well, whither crowds of females resort on a Holy Thursday, to wash their eyes, and, having performed this ceremony, each one drops a pin into the water. Their motive for doing so I am still ignorant of, but shall endeavour to discover, if possible. The Welsh are a very superstitious people, and no doubt there is some marvellous story connected with this well.

Near the entrance to Barry Island is a rock, and if the ear is applied to a cavity which is made in it, you may hear a noise exactly resembling a number of smiths at work.

The magnificent ruin of Neath Abbey was the next object which attracted my attention; it is situated about a mile from the town of Neath, and was founded by Richard de Grenville, younger brother of Robert Fitzhamon, the conqueror of Glamorganshire. The walls of the Priory House are almost entire, but of the Church scarcely a vestige remains. At Cadoxton Lodge, which stands in the beautiful vale of Neath, is a grand cascade.

I was anxious to proceed to Brecon, as I had heard much of its magnificent scenery, and in a few days I had the happiness to find myself in a country, where the contrast of beauty, splendour, and softness, presented to my enraptured view, was beyond all that imagination can conceive, or language describe. The ranges of

mountains which run across the country, and intersect each other in almost every direction ; the abrupt outline of the Brecknock Beacons, 2,862 feet above the level of the sea ; the deep valleys, "the ivy mantled" walls and towers of the old castle, the luxuriant groves, and the thick woods, strike the beholder with astonishment, and are calculated to inspire such emotions of terror and delight, as the admirers of the picturesque only can feel. The climate is exceedingly various, and I am told that in the more elevated districts, the cold is intense, but still the air is considered salubrious. There are in Brecon three churches, but of its castle nought is seen save the ruins ; cromlechs are found in many parts of the country, and Roman coins are frequently dug up.

I fear you will think my remarks rather desultory, but it is impossible in a *letter* to give a full description of every place. I therefore only notice what particularly pleases me, leaving a more accurate detail to some future time. Possibly I may publish my "Tour through Wales" some day, but I fear the public is already over-stocked with travels, tours, and voyages, so I had better not intrude mine. What say you, Merelina ?

Amongst other curiosities, I must tell you of an excavation in a conical hill, named "Cerrig Twyi," which I visited in Caermarthenshire. The hill is five or six hundred feet high, and beneath its gigantic form, rushes the river Towy with impetuous fury. The excavation alluded to, is called Thomas's Cave, and is supposed to have been the residence of Tym Sion Catti, a noted robber, who afterwards married the heiress of

Ystad Fin. I must tell you, that Ystad Fin is a farmhouse, situated in a beautiful vale of the same name, and once a mansion of considerable celebrity. After Tym Sion Catti had married, he settled at Tregeron, and became an antiquary and poet.

About four miles before you reach Caermarthen is the village of Llanarthy, where I saw "Merlin's Grove," so famous as the residence of the magician of that name. Of course his history can be nothing more than a romance. His father was supposed to have been a demon: Merlin's wonderful performances confirmed the belief, and inspired the vulgar with an idea that he possessed supernatural power. He instituted the order of the Knights of the Round Table, who were a body of men that bound themselves to assist each other at the hazard of their lives. Tradition reports that "Merlin, falling in love with a fairy, the lady, to get rid of his addresses, prevailed on him to enter into the cavern of a rock, from whence he was never seen to return."

I am told there really was a person of this name who dwelt here, and that in those barbarous ages, he was conceived to be invested with more than mortal power, because he knew something of mathematics, mechanics, and other things, with which his contemporaries were unacquainted.

I cannot forbear slightly mentioning Newton Park, the seat of Lord Dynevor, situated a little to the west of Llandillo Vawr. The scenery is exquisitely beautiful. On an eminence overhanging the Towy stands the castle, whose ruins consist chiefly of two towers, one round and

the other square, near which is a spring that ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours; *beneath* is a valley, watered by the river, and bounded on all sides by mountains, and a little *below* Llandillo is the celebrated Grongar Hill, where the Towy bends its course westward, and flows to Caermarthenshire. I ascended this hill, on the summit of which are the vestiges of a Roman encampment, and as I gazed on the enchanting prospect, I could not help repeating those beautiful lines of Dyer's—

“ Ever charming, ever new,
When will the landscape tire the view ?
 The fountain's fall, the river's flow,
 The woody vallies warm and low ;
 The windy summit, wild and high,
 Roughly rushing on the sky ;
 The pleasant seat, the ruin'd tow'r,
 The naked rock, the shady bow'r,
 The town and village, dome and farm,
 Each gives each a double charm,
 As pearls upon an *Aethiop*'s arm.” }

It would fill a volume were I to tell you of every old castle I have explored, every mountain I have clambered, and every legend I have heard during my journey through South Wales, besides which my description is so imperfect, and gives you such an inadequate idea of the beauties of this romantic country, that I am almost sorry I have attempted it. Nevertheless, should my letter prove at all interesting, and serve to divert your thoughts from the consideration of what is painful, my

aim will be answered, and I may possibly endeavour, as I proceed through North Wales, to write again.

I long to see you, dear Merelina, for I have a thousand things to tell you. Need I say how my sympathy is awakened for you, and how deeply I feel your griefs, but do not suffer yourself to be too much depressed. I am very saudine, and think it more than probable that Lord and Lady St. Clair may yet be reconciled through *your* influence; and if *not*, my dear friend must remember that "it is whom the Lord *loveth*, he chasteneth," and that she ought to comfort herself in the recollection that the parent whose sorrows so naturally affect her, is still blessed, far more blessed than she *might* have been, had her path through life been decked with flowers. Let the world frown as it will, the christian has joys—joys which *it* cannot comprehend—joys which *it* cannot destroy. The christian is permitted to hold deep converse with the God of heaven, and to extract consolation and comfort from the sacred pages of Divine inspiration, and there,

"The soul reposing on assured relief,
Feels herself happy, amid all her grief,
Forgets her labours as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song."

Dwell upon such thoughts as these, dear girl, and when next you write, let me hear that you are comforted, for your happiness will materially affect

Your tenderly attached friend,

AGNES.

LETTER X.

MERELINA ST. CLAIR TO AGNES PONSONBY.

Henley-upon-Thames.

My own Agnes,

Many, many thanks for your entertaining and consolatory letter, which convinces me that you are still the same kind girl as ever. Friendship in the world is indeed but a name, for amongst all the young people to whom I have been introduced, I have only met with one who is at all likely to supply your place, and with her my acquaintance is so short, that possibly I may be deceived. From what I have told you of Miss Charlton, you will easily imagine that *her* soul is not formed for friendship, and yet I really think her faults ought rather to be attributed to a bad education, than an ill-disposed heart. At all events, I am *willing* to think so, but she is so capricious and uncertain, so coquettish and conceited, that I cannot love her. What makes papa admire her so much, is to me a mystery, yet, in spite of all he says in her praise, I fancy he would be rather displeased if I were to make her my model. I fear she will remain a visitor at Henley all the summer, but if I go to Calcutta, of what importance will it be to me? You have observed that Lady St. Clair does not express her wishes on this point, but I have written to request that I may

be allowed immediately to place myself under her protection, and until I know the issue of this affair, I cannot feel settled. The extreme agitation of my mind is almost too much for me, and at times completely overpowers me, more particularly as I am anxious to conceal my emotion from papa. Every day proves more and more that if I would be a christian, *this* is not the soil on which I shall flourish, as I am obliged to pass life in one continued round of dissipation.

Had I been thrown in this situation before I had heard the sad tale already related to you, and my happiness had no alloy, I fear it would have been too great a trial. But now, if for a moment I feel dazzled by surrounding gaieties, I think over the words of my saint-like mother, and from the depths of my soul, I utter the prayer, "Lead me not into temptation, O God, but deliver me from evil."

I cannot tell you how delighted I am to have your dear mamma with me; she arrived a few days ago, and when I saw her, I could not help shedding tears of joy. In unburdening my mind to her, I felt my sorrows mitigated. She approves of the letter I have written to Lady St. Clair, and encourages me to hope that my parents may yet be re-united. O that I could think so myself! I should then be too, too happy.

Your description of the Welsh scenery has quite enchanted me, and almost inspired me with a desire to travel. Ah! dear girl, when you bade me farewell, and left me, to spend a few weeks with your aunt, how little did either of us imagine that the separation was for life,

but if I do go to India there will be no probability of our ever meeting again ; this thought wrings my heart, but, dear Agnes, we *may* meet in heaven. *You* have long since commenced "the spiritual warfare," and declared yourself a bearer of the cross, but *I* am a poor erring child, drawn aside by every slight temptation, and still unworthy the name of a christian. Pray for me ; pray that I may be kept in the straight and narrow path, which leadeth to eternal life. Strange infatuation ! that so few should choose to pursue what *all* who do pursue, without exception, declare to yield "a peace, passing understanding." It would seem that reason must have fled the greater part of human kind, or that all their mental powers must be sunk in a death-like stupor, a listless apathy. Life so short—eternity so long, and yet we blindly pass the years of our pilgrimage as if the very reverse were the case.

In the first part of my letter, I alluded to a young lady, whom I thought I should like for a friend, were I to reside at Henley. The Lady Claudine, daughter to the Marquis Raimondi, is the only one about here at all inclined to be serious, and she, I am told, is an excellent young creature.

We went a few days ago to a *déjeuner* given in honor of her birth-day, and I was particularly introduced to her by her cousin, Sir Alfred Villiers, a young nobleman whom I had met a few evenings before at a dinner party, but who *then* had scarcely noticed me. I suppose he saw that I was young, bashful, and unaccustomed to society, and therefore he paid me this little attention, for

which I felt grateful, as I was strange to almost everyone present, and do not possess the tact of some people, who are able to overcome all reserve in a moment. I found this young lady exceedingly pleasant; she talked to me a great deal, hoped I should often drive over to see her, as she, like myself, was an only daughter, and often experienced the want of a companion, and asked me if I should like to assist her in distributing little presents to the villagers (who, I must tell you, were having a dinner in the Park, under marquees). I joyfully assented, and never experienced more pleasure in my life than I did in beholding the many happy faces, and laughing, rosy-cheeked children by which we were surrounded. It was indeed a day of festivity to them, and blessings were heaped on the head of their youthful and amiable benefactress. An elegant and sumptuous table was spread for the guests, and when we were taking our seats, Sir Alfred placed himself between his fair cousin, and your friend. He is certainly a very superior young man, and his manners are perfectly *récherchées*. He seems doatingly fond of the Lady Claudine.

That Miss Charlton admires him I am convinced, for she is constantly trying to attract his notice, but whether it is reciprocal is not for me to determine. It does not appear at all probable, as he is particularly quiet and unassuming himself, though, to be sure, I have been told that people always choose the reverse of what they are themselves. In the course of conversation Lady Claudine asked him "if he were quite resolved not to honour her with his company in the evening."

"I think I am," said he, "for to do so will be violating an established rule."

"Do you *never* attend balls, then?" said I.

"Never, Miss St. Clair, they afford me no pleasure."

"No," said Lady Claudine, "my cousin is rather too fastidious on these matters; it is the only fault I find with him."

"Do you *disapprove* of dancing, Sir Alfred," asked I, "or do you only *dislike* it?"

"I do not disapprove of it, because in itself, it is a harmless and innocent recreation, and I deem all these amusements sinful only when they are pursued to excess, and when they are allowed to engross so much of our time as to interfere with our duties, but I never keep late hours, as I find an irregular course of life detrimental to my comfort. If I were to attend *one* of these fashionable evening parties, I must frequent *all*, or give occasion of offence to some of my best friends: I therefore make a rule only to accept invitations to dinner parties, and these I leave at eleven precisely. By this means I am enabled to follow my own *old-fashioned*, perhaps, but very agreeable mode of life, without interruption."

"Dear!" said Josephine, who sat nearly opposite to us, "I should like to know how you employ yourself. I am sure I should die of *ennui* if I were not constantly engaged in parties, or in making preparations for them."

"That *ennui* which is now so fashionable a complaint, I am a stranger to, Miss Charlton, and scarcely com-

prehend what is meant by it. Will you do me the favor to define the symptoms?"

"Will you find a remedy," said she.

"Most decidedly, if I can."

"Then I'll try, but indeed it is so dreadful, that I do not think I can. Let me see, one feels extreme languor; great depression of spirits; dissatisfaction with every one; thinks everything a *bore*; dislikes to be spoken to, and yet feels annoyed if allowed to remain unnoticed."

"Most alarming symptoms, certainly," exclaimed Sir Alfred, "and show that the mind must be deeply disordered. I should prescribe immediate employment, a little reflection, and—"

"What a droll creature you are," said Josephine, "what sort of employment do you mean?"

"Anything which would divert your thoughts. Do you never try a book?"

"Why, yes, I read when I have time, but that is so seldom. You know when I am in town, I am never alone longer than ten minutes together, and it would not be worth while to take up a book for so short a space of time."

"Certainly not, Miss Charlton, and if your malady is of no longer duration than ten minutes, you need not be apprehensive of death in consequence."

"I declare I never thought you could be half so delightfully funny, Sir Alfred. Pray, Lady Claudine, do you read much?"

"I set apart two hours every day for that purpose,

but if *I* were not constantly to peruse the best authors, my mind would soon resemble a wilderness."

"Miss St. Clair is quite silent," said Sir Alfred, turning to me, "will she not favor us with *her* sentiments?"

"At present," said I, "I have formed no plans—I have but just emerged from the school room."

"It is not at all likely that Miss St. Clair will form many plans," said Josephine, "while all is so novel and enticing around her."

"However enticing the world may be, Miss Charlton," said I, "I trust it will not have sufficient power over me to induce me to fritter away life in idleness, or even in pursuits of a trifling nature. I will endeavour to pass youth in such a manner that when old age overtakes me, I may have no cause to regret by-gone years."

"Delightful!" said Sir Alfred, "may such always be your feelings, and you will indeed be happy!"

A crimson blush overspread my face at this unexpected praise, for I did not think I had said anything particularly good.

"Excellent little dears! as ye are," exclaimed Josephine, "if we had but a pulpit, we should not want for preachers."

Sir Alfred looked displeased. Miss Charlton observed it, and in a subdued tone of voice said, "Ah! Sir Alfred, don't be angry: you know you have half promised to reform me, and though you will find me a little wayward, I'm not incorrigible: I'm not indeed. My vivacity will sometimes run away with me, but I hope I am incapable

of intentionally wounding any one. Will *you* forgive me, Miss St. Clair?" said she, offering me her hand.

"I willingly accept your hand," said I, "but indeed I have nothing to forgive, nor have I felt offended."

"I hope not, as I assure you I meant nothing."

"That is amiable, Miss Charlton," said Sir Alfred, "and proves that you *can* reflect."

"Did you ever doubt it?" said she, "I fear you judge me too severely."

"Nay, you judge yourself. I did not tell you to apologise to your friend."

"You did not *tell* me, but you looked as if you thought it necessary."

"Indeed! I was not aware my countenance expressed my thoughts so plainly."

"There, I have you now, Sir Alfred, you did *think* so, then."

"I will be candid; I *did* think you took up Miss St. Clair almost rudely."

"Pray, mention this circumstance no more," said I, "Miss Charlton is lively, and does not always think of what she says."

"I have a dreadful headache, Merelina," said Josephine, after a pause of some minutes, "and if we do not soon go home, we shall be unfit for the evening's entertainment."

"I am ready, when you please, Josephine," said I, and I begged papa would order the carriage immediately. He complied. Sir Alfred handed us in, bowed politely, and we drove away.

Upon arriving at our Villa, we each retired to our own apartments, and did not meet again until dinner was announced. Miss Charlton was then out of humour, but made an evident effort to conceal it; she seemed disappointed and annoyed, but at last, turning to Lord St. Clair, she said, "I wonder whether Sir Henry Beaumont will be at the Marquis Raimondi's tonight."

"I met him a few hours ago, at the Library," said papa, "and he told me he should. He said he should have been at the *déjeuner* had he been sure of meeting *you*, but he fancied it would be rather a stupid sight to see a parcel of old women eating roast beef."

"Well, I was heartily tired of it myself, but I wish he had been there; he is so entertaining. Really I never saw such a creature as that Sir Alfred, did you, my Lord? Don't you think him very odd?"

"He bears an excellent character in the neighbourhood, and is highly respected by all classes, but as I am *personally* unacquainted with him, at present, I can give no opinion. I understand all the young ladies within twenty miles round have lost their hearts since he came to reside at Henley, which was about eighteen months ago. I do not know how the hearts of Miss Charlton and my Merelina are affected by the introduction to him, but I hope they will not *both* be enamoured, as I shall not know what to do in such a case."

"You need entertain no apprehensions on my account, dear papa," said I, "for it would be quite impossible for me to *love* any one without a thorough

knowledge of his character. Besides, I have no idea of marrying for many many years."

"It is very well for you to talk, Merry," said papa, with an arch look, "only remember you may be caught when you least intend it. But what says your friend?"

"Oh! my Lord, I—I—I don't know what to think about him. He is very handsome, but he is so unimpassable, that it won't be worth while to waste my charms in trying to captivate him. If he had any soul at all, he would have professed himself my admirer long ago. Do you think," said she, blushing, "that he loves the Lady Claudine?"

"That he loves her is beyond a doubt, but it is with a sisterly affection," and Lord St. Clair looked at her as if he would have pierced into her very soul."

She was confused, but quickly rallying, "No, Lord St. Clair," said she, "you have not guessed my secret yet; it is with that Colonel—what's his name—Colonel Dalglish that I am in love. United to such a man I should never be at a loss, for his own odd character would afford me unceasing amusement. You may laugh, but I admire him beyond every thing."

"Now really, Josephine," said I, "that is beyond all credulity. I never saw any one in my life that I disliked so much: he is so coarse minded, and to you he was really rude."

"I do not consider what he said as rudeness; his bluntness delights me; he is so original. When shall we see him again?"

"If you desire it," said papa, laughing, "I will send an express for him to attend you this evening."

"No, no, not quite so desperate," and Josephine laughed in her turn.

We then retired to adorn ourselves, and accompanied by Lord St. Clair, entered the splendid saloon of the Marquis Raimondi. It was the first time I had ever been to a ball, except those little juvenile parties you know, dear Agnes, at Woodstock, which were formed to improve us in dancing, but which were scarcely entitled to the name of "balls." I felt rather awkward, and committed several slight blunders, such as refusing *one* for a partner and accepting *another*; but really there was a young nobleman, Lord Merton by name, who was so exceedingly ridiculous, and who talked such outrageous nonsense, that I did not consider myself under any obligation to dance with him, but when a more reasonable being solicited the favor, I granted it. The *consequence* was a slight altercation between the two gentlemen, which might not have terminated very amicably, had not papa happened to hear it, and pleaded my non-acquaintance with the usages of society as an excuse, and as I was the only daughter of Lord St. Clair, and an heiress, my *faux-pas* was taken no further notice of. I really thought this ridiculous custom was obsolete, and that every lady was allowed to do as she pleased, but I suppose there are a few who still consider that to do so is an infringement upon good manners. I did not enjoy myself much, and wished several times for the privacy of my own room; never-

theless I had some pleasant conversation with the Lady Claudine, and the Marquis paid me singular attention. In consequence of being exposed to the night air, I caught a severe cold, and have not been able to go out until to-day. Your dear mamma has been my constant companion, and to tell you the truth, I have really enjoyed myself, as I have been able to follow my own inclinations more fully than when quite well, for it is then expected that I should devote my time to the amusement of Miss Charlton, who is so fond of society, that she never likes to spend an evening at home.

And now, dear girl, fondly anticipating the pleasure of receiving another of your interesting epistles, I shall conclude, requesting you to believe me

Your unalterable friend,
MERELINA.

LETTER XI.

AGNES PONSONBY TO MERELINA ST. CLAIR.

Anglesea.

In compliance with my promise, I shall just give you a little sketch of the principal objects which have excited my attention and admiration during my journey through the northern counties of this enchant-

ing country, where the traveller may discover sufficient to gratify the most unbounded curiosity, if he has only *time*. If I were visiting a country for the purpose of benefiting the public by my observations upon it, I would most decidedly go *alone*, for with a party whose tastes are nearly all dissimilar, it is impossible to explore it in a manner exactly conformable to your own wishes. Mr. Fitz Williams is always in such a tremendous hurry, that he scarcely allows us time to see any one place thoroughly, and not being a very great admirer of Nature himself, he is satisfied with one *coup d'œil* of prospects which *I* could stand and gaze upon for hours. He seems to derive more pleasure in listening to the various absurd and superstitious tales which are repeated by the guides, than in viewing the fertile vales, the stupendous mountains, and the vegetable treasures, which abound in almost every part of Wales.

It was my intention to have kept a journal, and to have taken notes of every thing worthy of observation, but I have found it impossible to pursue this plan, and can therefore only just give you a description of those places which have made particular impressions upon me.

I was greatly delighted with a little village, called Festiniog, in the northern part of the county of Merionethshire. In itself it is insignificant, but not very far distant from the inn at which we stopped, there is a high rock, which looks like some isolated mass of stone, envied for its towering and majestic appearance, and therefore deserted by all meaner ones, and suffered to rear its lofty head in unrivalled grandeur. It is called

the "Pulpit of Hugh Llwyd Cynfell," who was said to have been a magician, and tradition declares that it was on this rock he practised his wondrous arts, and performed his nightly enchantments. What these were I cannot tell you, for I did not think it worth my while to listen, but Julia Fitz Williams could relate to you a long list of marvellous transformations which he effected by his magic.

The market town of Barmouth, is not unworthy of notice. It is built on the river Maw, and the Welsh name is Abermaw, but the English have corrupted it into Barmouth. It is built on ledges of rocks, which rise one above the other, so that in some places you walk level with the chimney tops of those houses on the lower ranges.

There is on the beach a very fine promenade, and the bathing is good. The ascent to the different streets is the same as at Clifton, by flights of steps. The entrance into the port is difficult, owing to the sand banks, but it is very much frequented as a watering place during the summer months.

In my opinion, however, Caernarvonshire is by far the most beautiful county of Wales, and by some tourists it has been compared to Switzerland. 'Tis here the lofty Snowdon (so named from its summit being usually covered with snow) rises to the height of several thousand feet, and the surrounding scenery is almost savagely wild. By the ancient Britons this mountain was held almost as sacred as the celebrated Parnassus was by the Grecians; but I do not hear that like that, it was

consecrated to any heathen gods. Our guide told us that in days of yore, when fairies condescended to habitate the regions of mortals, the margins of Snowdon's peaks were a favorite residence, and generally fixed upon by them for the celebration of their midnight revels. The prospect from this mountain is unbounded, for on a clear day you may see nearly all the north of England, parts of Scotland, and distinctly the Isle of Man.

Neither must Caernarvon Castle be passed over in silence, for it contains some relics of antiquity, although it is in a ruined condition. Not the least pleasing is the cradle in which the first Prince of Wales was rocked. You are aware that this castle was built by Edward the First, who finding his Welsh subjects were desirous of having a prince born in their own country to rule over them, sent his queen thither, and after the birth of his little son, presented him to them, and asked them "whether they would acknowledge for their sovereign a prince who spoke no other language than their own, and who imbibed no prejudices in favor of any other nation." They joyfully acceded, and Edward, by this art, induced them to obedience. This castle is protected by walls from eight to ten feet in thickness, and in the circuit of which are many turreted towers. There is one particularly beautiful, called the Eagle Tower, from having on it the figure of an eagle carved in stone. During those disastrous civil wars, which rent the kingdom in the reign of the unfortunate Charles, it fell alternately into the hands of the parliamentarians and the royalists. Sir John Owen was the last of the king's

party who had possession of it, and he did not retain it long, for a force superior to his own compelled him to raise a siege, and being soon after defeated at the battle of Llandegai, the whole of North Wales yielded to the parliament, and Owen received a sentence of condemnation. You are possibly familiar with the following anecdote of him, as it is to be found in several histories, but I will venture to relate it. "It is said that on hearing he was to be beheaded, he politely bowed to the court, and returned his humble thanks. On being asked the reason of such extraordinary behaviour, he replied, 'that he thought it was a great honor for a poor gentleman of Wales to lose his head with such noble lords,' (for there were four noblemen condemned with him), 'and moreover,' said he, 'I feared you would have hung me.' " It is recorded, however, that he afterwards obtained pardon, which I think he merited, if it were only for his deliberate coolness.

Another object of attraction to me was the church in the village of Wrexham, which is one of the *seven wonders of Wales*. Did you ever hear before that Wales had seven wonders? I never did. The other six are Mount Snowdon, St. Winifred's Well, Overton Church-Yard, Gressford Bells, Llangollen Bridge, and Pystill Rhaiadrye, but I cannot now enter into a description of them all. I shall, however, slightly mention Wrexham church, which is a magnificent building, principally remarkable for its sculpture, which, if you remember, Mr. Pennant, in his "Tour in Wales," describes as being carved "in ridicule of the regular

clergy, and female religious abbesses and nuns." Over the altar is a painting of the Lord's Supper, by Rubens. I am told that it was used as a prison by the enemies of Charles the First at the time of the wars, but I regret to say that we spent but a very short time in the examination of the architectural beauties of this Gothic building, and I have seen so much in so short a space of time, that I absolutely confound one thing with another. I assure you I have had to tax my memory severely, yet notwithstanding all my efforts I find I have forgotten many things which I should like to have remembered, and am resolved when next I travel not to depend upon anything so treacherous.

I cannot forbear mentioning one vulgar belief amongst the uneducated at Llanelian, a small village in Anglesea. In the cloister of the church there is a very antique looking box, something in the form of a half circle, which is fixed in the wall, and the entrance to which is about three feet in height. At the time of the wake persons get into this box, and those who can do so with ease, feel perfectly satisfied that they shall live to the end of that year at least, while those who are so unfortunate as to be rather *embonpoint*, give themselves up to the most tormenting fears, and regard their almost immediate death as inevitable.

I have just received a summons to prepare myself for another excursion, whither I know not, and must, therefore, bid you a hasty adieu!

Your ever sincere and attached

AGNES.

LETTER XII.

LADY ST. CLAIR TO HER DAUGHTER.

Calcutta.

No ! thou first born and only child of thy once happy mother, it must not be that we meet on earth. Painful as is the task, I must fulfil it, yes, *I* thy mother, whose every thought rests with thee, whose heart yearneth to behold thee, and whose prayers rise like the morning dew to heaven on thy behalf; *I* who nourished thee when a helpless babe, listened with rapture to thy first sweet prattle, and watched with tender interest the first dawning of reason in thy infant mind, must make one violent struggle over my maternal feelings, and forbid thee to come to me.

Unceasing anxiety and constant care have proved too much for me, and a disease for which no medical art can find a remedy will soon release my spirit from the frail tenement which confines it in this world of woe. It may be, my child, that ere you receive this letter "dust to dust, and ashes to ashes" shall have been pronounced o'er all that remains of me, and my soul have winged away its flight to the regions of eternal bliss. "On the wings of faith borne upward," I can feel that I am forgiven and blessed, all sinful and

unworthy as I am. Those agonies endured by my Saviour in dark Gethsamene, when huge drops of blood issued from every pore, through excess of mental anguish, shall seal my pardon and secure my soul.

Yet, "high as the heavens above the earth are the ways of God above the ways of men," and it may be that the measure of my days is not yet filled up, and that many a wearisome year is allotted me; but even so, what would your coming to India be productive of but misery?

Your father has at present no other claim on his affections—no other successor to his vast estates; you are the child of his hopes, and should he even refuse you his love, you will, while under his protection, maintain that station in society which your high birth has destined you to fill. Perchance, Merelina, *you* may be enabled to convince him that the life of gaiety and pleasure he leads will not yield him peace in his old age, will not conduct him to the land of rest. O this thought weighs down my soul with more intense anguish than all my own sufferings. And why? O why? Because for *me* the die is cast, adversity is my portion in this life, and it has been a bitter, bitter draught, but it will prove for my eternal benefit. Life has lost its charms to me, and death would be hailed with delight, could I but know that my own St. Clair had been brought to see "the error of his ways." And for you, O child of my soul, I tremble when I think of your youth, your inexperience, the numerous temptations to which you will be exposed, and the ridicule to which you will be subjected, if you

dare (and I trust you will) to own yourself a Christian. I tremble lest all these, and the natural love of the world, which the young heart in all the buoyancy of hope, unfettered by prejudice, and unchilled by disappointment, is inclined to feel, should dazzle you. I tremble lest the fascinating charms and bewitching though delusive joys which the world will falsely tell you it can yield, should lead your mind astray, and tempt you to deviate from the one straight and narrow way.

Could I welcome you to the land of your birth, to the home of your infancy—could I see it right to indulge my own wishes, life might yet be desirable, but the motives which could induce me to act thus would be selfish. *I* could not take you into that society, which at your age is both proper and necessary. *I* could not suffer worldly cares to engross my attention on the brink of eternity, nor could *I* leave you to mix in the world without a protector. What would be the inevitable consequence? You would be doomed to pass your days in gloomy seclusion, with no other companion than your heart-broken and sorrow-stricken mother; and with hopes blighted, a character brought too soon to maturity, and prejudices imbibed from a too limited knowledge of the world, you would yourself become cold hearted, suspicious, and morose.

And when I should have bid adieu to all terrestrial objects, and you should be left a lonely wanderer in a country whose manners were foreign to you, and whose customs were unfamiliar—perhaps *then*, Lord St. Clair,

irritated at your rejection of the home he once offered you, would spurn you from him as he did the wife who loved him.

But ah ! Merelina, a woman's love as far exceeds a man's as his towering and gigantic strength exceeds her helpless weakness. *Her's* is a deep feeling of the soul, which "many waters cannot quench;" *his* a strong passion which soon subsides.

Let me entreat you, by all the evil consequences that have ensued from my own ill-assorted union, not to suffer yourself to be conducted to the hymeneal altar without *much* and *serious* reflection on the subject. Remember it is a state of bliss unequalled, or woe unparalleled. When two congenial spirits meet, and blend in sweet harmony together ; when each, forgetful of self, seeks only to gratify the other ; when both are steering on their onward course to Canaan's happy land, and their only contention is, who shall conform most to the will of God, then 'tis indeed a happy state.

Now I knew that it will be your father's principal aim to unite you to a man of good fortune, and of a family worthy of forming an alliance with a daughter of the illustrious houses from which you sprang ; and I would by no means have you regardless of these things myself, but they must be of secondary importance. If my dear girl is a worldling (which God forbid), let her marry a worldling, but if she be a christian, she must choose for a partner one who fears God.

Do not, however, think from what I have said that I would have you unmindful of your father's wishes ;

far from it. I would recommend you to inform him that as a mere child, you do not feel qualified to judge between your parents; that both are equally dear to you, but that, by *my* advice, you have determined to remain with him, if it is his pleasure, but that, of course, you will keep up a correspondence with me.

I entreat you to forget his injuries to *me*, and to do all in your power to render him happy: think of him only as an indulgent parent.

I command you to obey him as your father, and to comply with his requests in every thing, so long as they do not interfere with your duty to your Maker. And now I will detain you no longer, except to say that should you ever by any chance hear tidings of your uncle Alphonso, my only brother, you will, for my sake, cultivate an acquaintance with him. I saw him twice after he joined the army; and some time after he sent me word that he was married and had a little son, but from that hour I have been unable to hear anything about him. The date of his last letter to me was Norfolk: but I am sure I have already imposed on your patience.

Adieu! my own, my beloved one! May guardian angels hover round you, and shield you from harm!

Your affectionate Mother,

ELEANOR ST. CLAIR.

LETTER XIII.

MERELINA TO LADY ST. CLAIR.

Henley-upon-Thames.

DEAREST AND BEST OF MOTHERS,

How can I express my feelings, or how pour out my griefs! To know that you are ill, dying—and alone; no husband near to comfort you, no child to nurse you; overwhelmed with sorrow, and not one kind friend around your bed to administer the balm of consolation to your wounded mind. O God!—my heart will burst—will break. Do not, O do not die, my mother, or let your Merelina come to tend you in your last hours; she will watch over you, as you watched over *her* in those blissful days of unconsciousness, when she lay a helpless baby in your arms. Rouse yourself once more; bid the tear cease to flow; bind up the broken heart, and live for my sake. *What* shall I do without you? *What* will life be when *you* are gone. I cannot, no, I cannot bear it. ——————

Ah! mamma, I laid down my pen, and eased my overburdened soul by shedding tears, and now I will distress you no more, nor disturb your peace of mind, if *indeed* you are sinking, but “Gracious God, wilt thou afflict me so severely; must I submit to such a dispensation?”

Again I am yielding, although I know if you were in my situation, you would bear all without murmuring.

Would that I *could* imitate you! would that I resembled you! I will treasure up your words in my heart; not a day shall elapse without your letters being perused once—twice—and again. I will obey your commands, I will try and follow in your steps, that so we may meet in heaven, my own beloved mamma.

But perhaps you will not die; perhaps you are nervous and weak, and fancy yourself worse than you are; yes, I will hope so, I will hope that you are now better, that your spirits are revived; and that you will write in a more cheerful strain, and bid me come and be happy with you.

In three weeks more a packet will arrive. Haste, then, ye tardy moments, haste to fly away, and bring the joyful tidings. Blow swifter, breezes, blow the expected ship across the mighty ocean, and tell a tale of hope to my bewildered mind. Be calm, rebellious spirit, and in meek submission, wait to know thy Maker's will.

I trust you will not be displeased when I tell you that I have sent your letter to Lord St. Clair; he has been in town for the last few days, and is not expected to return till the end of the month: I therefore thought it better to let him know the state you are in, lest anything should happen to you, and he should reproach *me*. I have received no answer yet, but surely, surely he will do something, perhaps he will *come* and see you. I am sure he admires your character, but like the young man in the parable, “he has great possessions,” and cannot

make up his mind to "go his way, sell all that he has, and give to the poor;," and lest conscience should be too powerfully awakened, he is afraid to come in contact with those whom he considers "righteous over much."

He *must* love you. I will make him, I will entreat him to see you once again, to call you once more his own dear Eleanor.

Would this make you happy? Will you tell me what will, and I will spend my life in endeavouring to make my two dear parents comfortable. O why did I not die, rather than live to be so wretched.

But I must cease to write, I am too agitated. I will retire to my own room, and there I will pour out my soul in prayer to the God of heaven: I will sue for mercy; I will seek for resignation, and when again I take up my pen, I will try to be more composed. Till then, mamma—farewell!

Your deeply afflicted child,

MERELINA.

LETTER XIV.

HON. MISS CHARLTON TO THE BARONESS DE ROSNY.

Henley-upon-Thames.

Well! my dear Almira, I am literally almost moped to death, and were it not that there dwells in this

neighbourhood an attraction more powerful than the magnet I should not be long in escaping from it. Lord St. Clair is out, upon parliamentary business I presume, and his daughter is at present a very gloomy companion. Lady St. Clair is dying, and has written her a very affecting letter, but I am certain that if Merelina were not convinced that she looks more lovely in tears than any other way, she would never yield so much to her feelings. She is just one of those languishing looking beauties, whom weeping becomes. Bless me! if I were to indulge in this tender sort of grief, I should be obliged to shut myself up in a convent, I should be such a fright; but then you know I never was formed for trouble. It was always intended by nature that the world should homage such beauty as mine, nor dare to contradict my will.

Would you believe that Sir Alfred continues to behold me with greater indifference than ever, and almost avoids me. It certainly shows great want of taste on his part, because I never was eclipsed at any court in Europe, and I have visited almost every one. I should conclude him to be a misogynist, were it not that he pays Miss St. Clair the most flattering attentions, and I would rather endure him to love Lady Claudine than her. I have used many efforts to make her look ridiculous in his eyes, but it is in vain; she is so guarded and circumspect in all she says and does. I think it must be an inherent principle of contradiction implanted within me, to desire what is unattainable, that makes me so greatly admire this Sir Alfred Villiers.

A visitor arrived at Henley Villa, a few days ago, whom I do not like at all. Mrs. Ponsonby is her name; she is the widow of the late Capt. Ponsonby, of the 7th Dragoon Guards, and left in rather reduced circumstances; but she has the appearance of a gentlewoman, and has been accustomed to good society, yet for all that she is an odd sort of body, and vastly too particular about young people's behaviour. Then she has such penetration that it is impossible to escape the scrutiny of her keen eye, and fancies a pretty girl ought to sit with downcast eyes and modest look, as if unconscious of her charms; but I have quite a different opinion, and think if one is only handsome one has a right to show as many airs as one pleases. What say you?

As usual, I am going to give you an account of all that has passed, or at least of a few little circumstances. A few mornings ago, Sir Alfred called to see Lord St. Clair, but not finding him at home, entered the breakfast parlour where Miss St. Clair, Mrs. Ponsonby, and myself were sitting at work. He feared he was an intruder, but did not like to leave the house without enquiring after our health, and turning to Merelina, who has of late been rather indisposed, he said, "You look ill this morning, Miss St. Clair, do you not find the Henley air agree with you?"

"Perfectly, I thank you, but I am suffering from violent cold, the effects of keeping late hours."

"Ah! said he, how much better off would you be, could you be prevailed on to follow my *prosish* way of living, as Miss Charlton denominates it."

"Indeed it would require but very little to prevail with *me* to do so," said she, "for I am already convinced that such constant late visiting is injurious to the health, and not at all conducive to happiness."

"Miss St. Clair then is not one of those fair votaries of pleasure, who think they are sent into the world only to flutter for a season, win admiration, and die."

"I hope not, Sir Alfred. Do you think my sex so weak?"

"Pardon me, not *your* sex alone. I fear there are too many of *both* sexes who *live* without a thought of *death*. But I shall shock you, and ought to apologise for introducing such conversation."

"O," said Merelina, blushing, "do pray treat *us* as rational creatures, we like such conversation, at least *I* do," and she glanced around.

"It is delightful," said I, trying to look as grave as I possibly could. "Now *do* go on, Sir Alfred, and tell us how we *ought* to live."

"*I* cannot tell you, Miss Charlton, it is to the bible you must refer."

"Of course, I know that, but I should like to know how you live *yourself*."

"Not as I should wish, very often, I am not better than other people, but you know if we do our best——"

"Well now, that is just what I always say, if we do our best, we *can* do no more, and shall therefore be forgiven."

"No, I did not intend to finish the sentence *so*," said he, smiling.

"How then?"

"Why, I was going to say that if we do our very best, we must trust in Christ for——"

"For the rest," said I, again interrupting him.

"You have not anticipated my thoughts, even now, Miss Charlton; we must trust in Christ for *all*, if we would be saved, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

"That to me is incomprehensible. It seems a perfect contradiction to urge the necessity of good works one moment, and the next to pronounce them unavailable."

"If you will think seriously," said Sir Alfred, "you will discover nothing like contradiction."

"Well, I do wish to be serious, but how shall I begin? I suppose I must put aside my work, turn down my eyes, and utter deep sighs. Do I look grave enough now," said I, elongating my face tremendously.

"Mrs. Ponsonby shook her head, Merelina looked shocked, and Sir Alfred said, in a tone of decided displeasure, "Such levity is not consistent with our subject, but I am to blame for introducing it."

"I hope," said Mrs. Ponsonby, "you will not deprive us of the pleasure of hearing your sentiments on such interesting topics, because a thoughtless giddy girl cannot behave with decorum. It is conduct like this which leads your sex to think woman an unreflecting being, pleased only with trifles, and incapable of fixing her attention steadily on one thing, but Sir Alfred Villiers is too generous to condemn *all* for *one*."

"Dear," said I, "how very sentimental! but I did

not know that I had given offence to any one. I am sure I was listening with the most profound attention, but I am always wrong. I wish I was not of so lively a temperament, indeed I do. Sir Alfred, will you continue?"

"I do not know why I should presume to utter opinions which are no doubt your own, Madam," said he, turning to Mrs. Ponsonby, "and which you could explain infinitely better than myself, but I am anxious to convince Miss Charlton, that although we are saved by faith in Christ, and faith alone, and although we can obtain pardon for our manifold transgressions, only by pleading his merits, *still*, good works are absolutely necessary to *prove* that faith, because, as St. James in his epistle expresses it, 'Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.' The sense of pardon and acceptance through Christ, *must*, if it be well grounded, inspire us with love, gratitude, and every other fine feeling which the heart is capable of—then love, of course, incites to obedience. Is this clear to you?" addressing me.

"Quite, I understand that," and I did *really* look grave, "but what do you mean by good works? Do you mean that one must be always reading the bible, praying, and visiting the poor, because if this is what is required, religion must be a melancholy thing."

"My dear Miss Charlton," said Sir Alfred, bestowing on me a look of pity, "will you forgive me if I say that there is much blame attached to those who had the charge of instructing you in the principles of our holy religion; you appear to have an altogether wrong idea of its nature. Real religion, far from inspiring the

mind with gloom, fills it with joy inexpressible. It is true that the reading of the scriptures and prayer are among the christian's highest pleasures, but he is not expected, nor would it be right for him to spend *all* his time in these acts. He would by so doing have no *trials* of his faith, and his character would never be known. The hermit who voluntarily secludes himself from society, and drags on a weary existence, unloving and unloved by all his fellow men, hoping by this self-denial to render himself acceptable to his Maker, does not so plainly fulfil his duty, or so clearly manifest his love to his Saviour, as *he* who, living amidst family and friends, surrounded by temptations and dangers, pursues his heavenward course with undiminished vigour, bears reproaches and injuries with patience; receives praise without being too much elated, and rebuke without being offended; joins in all the innocent delights which the world still has power to yield, and yet 'keeps himself unspotted.'

"You really give a fine description of a Christian, Sir Alfred," said I, "and almost make me wish to be one, but now, do just define what you mean by *innocent* delights. I suppose you disapprove of balls, theatres, concerts, and all such amusements."

"What will Miss Charlton say when I tell her that I have now in my pocket tickets for the next morning concert at —, and intended to request Lord St. Clair to present them, and obtain permission for me to accompany Miss St. Clair, Mrs. Ponsonby, and herself thither?"

"I should say you were the oddest creature living," said I.

"Such is the real fact, then," and turning to Merelina he said, "Will you be afraid, Miss St. Clair, to place yourself under my protection, and in the absence of his Lordship suffer me to be your escort. But I am sure you are ill," observing the tears trickling down her cheeks.

"I am not ill," said she, "but I am a weak silly girl. You must excuse me, Sir Alfred, but your sentiments resemble so strongly those of my own loved mother, who I fear will soon be taken from me, that I can hardly suppress my feelings."

"How unintentionally have I wounded you," said he, casting on her a look of tenderness almost amounting to love, "but if I have caused you a moment's pain, let me now endeavour to restore you to calmness by pointing out to you the glory that awaits the true believer. Not to mourn at all, for those we love, Miss St. Clair, would prove insensibility, but when we remember that our friends are taken from a world of suffering, and transported to a land where all is light, and life, and joy, we should be comforted, and moderate our grief. But I wish I had not awakened such painful sensations."

"O," said I, starting up in great haste, "here is Colonel Dalglish, Merelina. Pray compose yourself, or he will have a thousand things to say about you. Did you ever see him, Sir Alfred?"

At this moment he entered, and Miss St. Clair stepped forward. "Hem!" said he, "you are well

engaged. Ah! Sir Alfred, how do you do? Pray which of these ladies have you come to see?"

"All, I believe, my good Colonel, I am a general lover, this morning."

"Ha, ha, ha, and so you don't know which to fix upon. But where's your pa?" turning to Merelina, "I am come to spend a few days with him."

"I regret to say papa is in town, Colonel Dalglish, but if you will honor *us* with your company, we will endeavour to entertain you."

"I'm very much obliged to you, my dear, but I'm not so fond of women's society."

"Say rather," said Sir Alfred, "that you cannot appreciate their society. Without kind woman's lovely smile earth would be——"

"Heaven!" said the Colonel, abruptly.

"A wilderness, Sir," said Sir Alfred, and his eye fell on Merelina. She blushed deeply.

This was intolerable, Almira; his glances should have been directed to me, but, determined not to let him see my chagrin, I addressed the Colonel gaily, saying, "I shall be more complimentary, Sir, to you, than you are to us, for if you had not arrived so opportunely, I should have died of melancholy."

"Hem!" said he, "died of melancholy, when Sir Alfred Villiers is present. I thought all girls were mad to be in his company."

Here Sir Alfred laughed out, and said, "I am sure, Colonel, I am a much more important personage than I ever imagined myself to be."

"What conceited creatures you men are!" said I, "If you knew how greatly we preferred your absence to your presence, you would not think so highly of yourselves."

"And yet," said the Colonel, "you this moment said you should have died if I had not arrived; but it is just like your sex—so fickle, and *changeable* as the wind."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Ponsonby, "it has been your lot only to associate with the most unamiable of our sex, and so you have imbibed prejudices against *all*, but I flatter myself you would not find all alike."

"Very likely not, Madam," said he, "but as I have been duped once, I shall never have anything more to do with them."

"You cold hearted creature! said I, "I really think you made an impression upon that Miss Montague you met the other evening at Lord St. Clair's, and if you have, you surely won't be so cruel as to disappoint her."

Even Merelina could not resist laughing at this, and said, "I do not think the Colonel tried to render himself particularly *pleasing* either."

"No, not I, indeed, my dear, but now-a-days, one can't speak to a woman, but what she fancies one's in love with her. However, I shall go for a ride, and if you are not engaged I will return to dinner. Where are you bound, Sir Alfred?"

"I will accompany you, Sir, if you please, but how shall we decide about this concert," turning to us.

"Pray let us go," said I, "you will not object, Merelina, will you?"

"Not in the least, provided my kind friend, Mrs. Ponsonby, will accompany us."

"As it rests then with you, Madam," said Sir Alfred, turning to her, "I hope you will condescend to give a gracious answer."

"Most decidedly; the obligation will be on our side, for we could not possibly attend such a place without a gentleman."

"I will be here then, ladies, in time to conduct you to the concert, and hope to see Miss St. Clair in better health and spirits."

"And then," said I, "you will continue your conversation. I long to know what you think of theatres, and whether you will allow me to indulge in going."

"Indeed, I shall not presume to interfere with Miss Charlton, in any way," said he, "but happy should I think myself, could I succeed in convincing her that christianity is a grace which adorns a woman more than the most costly ornaments, or the most perfect symmetry of form; but the Colonel is waiting, I must wish you ladies 'Good morning,' and, bowing politely, he mounted his horse, and was quickly out of sight.

When Lord St. Clair returns, I have a scheme in my head, which I shall try and put into execution. It is to get Merelina married to a young Spaniard, named "Dom Manuel Bernard de Silva," who has paid her great attention, but she is such a modest creature, you could

not induce her to carry on a little flirtation with any one for the world.

Hark! the last dinner bell has rung, and now for a bit of fun with the Colonel.

In great haste,

I remain,

Your's sincerely,

JOSEPHINE CHARLTON.

LETTER XV.

MERELINA TO LORD ST. CLAIR.

Henley.

HONORED SIR,

I should not presume to allude to a subject, which I am conscious must be unpleasant to you, were it not that I consider it my duty to acquaint you that I have received a letter from my own dear mamma, which has awakened all my fears. Her language is most affecting, and so plainly indicates the state of her mind, that I think it better to forward it immediately.

I trust I shall not incur your displeasure for doing so, but should any thing happen to her without your

knowledge, I fear you would blame me, and be unhappy during the remainder of your life.

Let me, O my Father, appeal to your feelings: your wife—that wife who still loves *you*, but whose heart you have broken, is stretched on a bed of sickness, forsaken by those who ought to be her comforters, and alone in a foreign land. If you suffer her to continue so, will not a day arrive when you will bitterly repent it?

I am your child, and have no right to dictate to *you*, but as you value your peace of mind, I beseech you, ere it be too late, repair the wrongs you have done her, and suffer her spirit to be disengaged from worldly cares before she leaves this world of woe.

You say that you love *me*; then dear, dear Papa, grant my request—write to Lady St. Clair, or, dare I ask you to visit her? Let her not die, if indeed she is dying, without blessing you—but what do I say? Her pure and holy soul has already prayed that you may be happy, and blessed the man who has robbed her of every earthly joy. I tell you, Sir, that my Mother is an injured woman, and unless you yield to my entreaties, I am a wretched girl, but it is useless to add more.

I shall wait the return of the messenger with indescribable anxiety.

Your dutiful, but sorrowing daughter,
MERELINA ST. CLAIR.

LETTER XVI.

LORD ST. CLAIR TO HIS DAUGHTER.

London.

You have prevailed, Merelina, you have prevailed. I yield to your request, and in compliance with your wishes, I will sail by the next packet for Calcutta, and consent to meet yet again the once beautiful Eleanor.

But O ! do not *you* reproach me, *you* for whom alone I have preserved life; *you* whom I love with the truest affection.

You cannot comprehend our feelings towards each other. I have already told you that I *respect* Lady St. Clair, but it was never my intention to have married such a woman. We were both to blame for not enquiring into each other's character previously to marriage, but it avails not to talk of what is past and irremediable. I have treated your mother with the respect her high principles deserve—I have taken the management of her pecuniary matters as she requested, and I have never allowed her to want for any thing that money could procure. My company I *have* denied her, because, had

we lived together, we should have been more miserable than we are now, as it would have been impossible to have agreed on any one point.

I certainly regret that I took you from her, and allow this to have been an act of cruelty, but I am punished for it, for I already perceive that you entertain the same strict notions as Lady St. Clair, to prevent which was my only motive for removing you from her. Could you persuade me that we are to live *for ever*, you might *convert* me, but even then you know we are told "Christ died to save us." Where then is the necessity for individual effort? If his blood were considered a sufficient atonement, it is of little importance what sort of a life we lead.

But I have not time to enter into an argument now. I will only say, that in three days from this date, you may expect to see me, when we will make the necessary preparations for leaving England.

I know what you must feel, but do not yield to your grief. Be comforted with the reflection that if there is such a place as heaven, Eleanor will surely go there, and find, I hope, a reward for all her goodness.

I would advise you to seek for an alleviation of your sorrows in the society of Miss Charlton; her gaiety may perhaps be able to dispel your sadness. From

Your affectionate Father,

ST. CLAIR.

LETTER XVII.

MERELINA TO LORD ST. CLAIR.

Henley Villa.

Ah ! my Lord, it is alas too late ; another letter has arrived with the heart-rending intelligence that my sainted mother now sleeps in Jesus. See what she says. I send you the last sad token of her love to me, which tells in what a happy frame she died. But I am too much overwhelmed to use my pen—every chord vibrates with the anguish I endure ; and your Merelina is reduced to the last stage of misery. To hear sentiments like those contained in the note I received from you, grieves me beyond measure ; but I do not now feel equal to the task of endeavouring to convince you differently. Perhaps, at some future period, you will, with me, investigate those Scriptures you now reject, and I humbly pray that your eyes may be enlightened.

I hope you will soon return to Henley, as I feel unequal to entertain Miss Charlton, and she is not one who can sympathise with me in my affliction.

Take especial care of the letter I have sent you, for to peruse it in my hours of retirement will be my only consolation.

I am, my dear papa,
Your *now* motherless child,
MERELINA.

LETTER XVIII.

LADY ST. CLAIR TO HER DAUGHTER.

Calcutta.

MY OWN DEAR CHILD,

Ere yet the lamp of life is extinguished, or reason is hurled from its throne, let me tell you that I die happy—yes, happy.

All that is past will in a few hours be remembered only as a dream ; my disembodied spirit shall have winged away its flight to a better and a happier world, and with angels and archangels I shall be crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, which is, and was, and is to come.”

After I wrote to you, I was taken much worse, and have not since quitted my bed. For your consolation I must tell you that I am surrounded by kind friends, and a faithful minister ; not those friends who *ought* to be near me ; not those who are related to me by ties of blood ; but by *those* who, pitying my loneliness, feel their hearts melted into compassion, and pay this last tribute of respect to a fellow sinner.

But worldly cares are hushed, and worldly fears are quieted now. I can feel nothing but joy at the glorious

transformation which will soon take place. Yet one little thought rests upon you, my own sweet child; one prayer is breathed for your salvation; one sigh escapes me when I think of what *you* will have to contend with; but press on—onwards, till the race is run; faint not, nor be weary. Think of the prize you will receive, if you continue faithful—a crown of life, which when ages and ages in countless numbers shall have passed away, will still be yours.

But my strength is fast declining—the hand of death is upon me—I feel, I feel the tide of life is ebbing fast—my fingers tremble—my eyes grow dim—my brain reels, O God!

Reason returns, and I wake to consciousness; tell—tell my husband that his Eleanor forgives him, prays for him, blesses him; but O, I can guide my pen no longer; my weakness overpowers me; my pulse beats slow—slower—my child, my Merelina, I die—God bless you; Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my——

TO MISS ST. CLAIR.

Here, Madam, Lady St. Clair's pen dropped, and she was unable to conclude the sentence she had begun. For a few moments she remained insensible, but once again reviving she exclaimed, "Blessed Saviour, receive my spirit;" her voice failed—she beckoned me to approach—a smile almost unearthly illumined her countenance—she gave one deep sigh—and her eyes closed. I

seized her hand, but it was cold and lifeless, the spirit had fled to the bosom of its God. Again I touched her, but the icy chillness of the mouldering clay made me shudder. I gazed in silence, and wept, for I could not help it. And now, in fulfilment of a promise made to your dying mother, I seize the first opportunity afforded me of sending this letter.

I have performed what she requested, as respects distributing little legacies and presents to her domestics, and have cut off her beautiful hair, and placed in her casket, which will be forwarded to you as early as possible, and which contains all those treasures intended expressly for you.

Her *will*, Madam, is sent to Lord St. Clair, who will give what orders he pleases about the disposal of her furniture, &c. &c.

Of course we have been obliged to consign her remains to the tomb, as in this country it is impossible to keep a corpse many days, but according to her wishes she was buried with very little pomp.

On *me* devolved the task of reading the funeral service, and by *me* she was conveyed to her long, last resting place, and now,

“ The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twitt’ring from her straw-built shed,
The cock’s shrill clarion or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse her from her lowly bed.”

In conclusion, I shall merely add, that if there are any questions which I can answer, or any way in which I can be of service to you, it will afford me real pleasure,

as Lady St. Clair was more respected in Calcutta than you can conceive, and her name will be remembered, long after her body shall have crumbled to dust, and become the prey of worms.

I have the honor to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient,

REGINALD LIGHTON.

LETTER XIX.

HON. MISS CHARLTON TO THE BARONESS DE ROSNY.

Henley-upon-Thames.

MY DEAR ALMIRA,

If ever I live to be Queen of England, I will make a law, that all "old maids" shall be transported to some desolate land, where they can indulge their love of scandal without injuring any one. I declare *one* such creature in a village is sufficient to set it all of an uproar, but poor things! I ought not to speak of them thus, as I *do* know a few *very agreeable* old maids, and perhaps I shall be one myself, for men are such overbearing tyrants, that I don't think I should like to be tied to one of them. If ever I am, I'm determined I'll not promise to *obey*. I wonder to what extent obedience and submission are expected to be carried. I suppose if

my husband were to say, "My dear, the moon is made of green cheese," he would expect me to reply, "Indeed! I never thought so myself, but of course if *you* say so, it must be true."

Well, really if I *did*, I should deserve to be called a *most* submissive wife.

However, I was going to tell you what mischief old maids make, by interfering with other people's concerns. Yesterday morning, a Miss Montague, who is the finest picture of an old maid you can possibly fancy, called at Henley Villa. She is certainly nearly sixty, and dresses like a girl of my own age; wears no caps, although her head is almost bald, rouges her cheeks, pencils her eyebrows, and has a set of teeth as white as ivory, hoping by these means to conceal the ravages of time on a set of features, *once* beautiful, I have no doubt; but alas! the wrinkled brow, and sunken jaws, tell tales.

She said she had come to condole with Miss St. Clair for the loss of her mamma, and placing herself by her side, began as follows:—

"Well, dear, I am very sorry for you, but I have had a great many more troubles than you ever had, and I have besides such bad health, I am never well many days together. I am a dreadful sufferer, and have a great deal to put up with from every one. My brother's little girl came last week to stop with me, whilst he and his wife went out for pleasure, for they were afraid to leave her with servants: maiden sisters always *are* made a convenience of, and never get any thanks either. Well, this child was so careless as to spill a cup of tea all down

a beautiful new satin dress, and when I told my brother he only laughed, and said, "I had no one but myself to buy for, and so it did not matter." When I have any children, I'll manage them properly, and teach them good manners. But this is not what I came to tell you," said she, drawing her chair closer, "Do you know, Sir Alfred Villiers is going to be married to the Lady Claudine? He has made her an offer, and it's all settled. The Marquis objects to it, and wishes her to have the young Count de Nevers, but I believe she is quite determined. It is all very well, but he has certainly behaved very ill to Miss —— I forget her name; she lives in town. People say he went to see her for two years, and that she is nearly broken hearted: it is very shameful of him, but that's the way with over-religious people, they are ten times worse than those who make no profession. I should be ashamed to appear so good in public, and act so ill in private; should not you?"

"My dear Miss Montague," said Merelina, "this may not be *true*; the world is very uncharitable."

"Uncharitable, indeed! why it is all over the village."

"Who," said I, "first spread the report?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Montague, "Blanche, my lady's maid, lived with this Miss ——, and she told me in confidence, but as I thought it proper he should be exposed, I told Miss Wilton, and she told some one else, I suppose."

"I will ask Sir Alfred," said I, "for I am resolved to know the truth of it."

"Not for the world," said she, "it is much better to

say nothing about it to him, as, after all, I believe most young men are alike. Dear me! I would not have him told of it for the world," and then turning to Merelina, she said, "Pray have you seen Major Wilkins' daughter yet? She only 'came out' last winter, but they say she is *such* a flirt: she talks to all the young men, but in the society of ladies she is perfectly dumb, and do you know, I've been told she practises before a looking-glass how to turn her eyes, and to twist her mouth, and to smile, and half a hundred other things. I call it quite shocking for girls to make such idols of their persons. Mrs. Wilkins herself was nobody. The Major married her for beauty, but she hadn't a penny, and her manners are quite barbarous. I cannot think how persons can degrade themselves so."

"I have often wondered how you spent your time, Miss Montague," said I.

"O," said she, "I am obliged to *hear* such things, I am sorry to say, but it is with real regret I *repeat* them, only I thought perhaps I could amuse Miss St. Clair a little."

"I am much obliged to you ma'am," answered Merelina, "but, indeed, I care very little to hear my neighbour's concerns or failings, for I find enough to do to correct my own."

"Ah!" said Miss Montague, sighing, "and so do I, I am sure. I would not on any account pass a day without reading the psalms and lessons. But pray have you ever enquired into the character of that poor family, whom you provide with meat twice a week, and to whom

you have given so many clothes. I am told they are not at all deserving, but are lazy, indolent people who waste more than they earn."

"They have a large family of children," said Miss St. Clair, "and the woman has bad health, consequently I shall never think myself to blame for assisting them."

"I am sure," said Miss Montague, "I know nothing about them, for it is only what I heard. Pray what do you think of Sir Henry Beaumont, Miss Charlton?"

"Indeed, madam," I replied "I have never thought about him at all, but if you particularly wish to know my opinion, I will sit down and consider."

"O no, only I have no patience with him making love to every girl he sees, and then laughing at them, and he dresses, too, in such a foppish manner. Do you know, Blanche told me that he never can keep a valet many months, he is so whimsical, and there is not a fancy soap, or a new perfume advertised, but what he must buy it. It is really ridiculous, but I have three other calls to make this morning, so I must leave you. I hope you will be in better spirits next time I see you, Miss St. Clair. Pray remember me to his lordship. Good morning."

"I am really glad she is gone," said Merelina, "for I dislike scandal so much."

"I am sure I do," said I, "but old maids cannot talk anything else."

"Nay, Josephine, you must not say so, for I know several very worthy old maids, who have remained so

from choice, and I think there may be many motives which may induce a person to prefer a life of celibacy. *Some* may wish to be freed from the anxieties attendant upon a married life, and *others* may have been disappointed in early life of their heart's first love. In the latter case, they are right in refusing to bestow upon another their hand, when they feel that their heart is no longer their own."

"You have very refined notions," said I, "but if I could not have the one I loved, I *would* have some one else, just to show that I did not care."

"And yet, Miss Charlton," said Mrs. Ponsonby, "in acting thus, you *would* be your own enemy. Only fancy yourself in such a situation, tied to a man whom you could not love, compelled to submit to the caprices of one for whom you entertained no respect, and obliged to pass all your days with a being whose society must be irksome."

"O horrible," said I, "but to remain single would be worse you know, because *then* the world would see that one was disappointed."

"You are a funny creature, Josephine," said Miss St. Clair, "and I cannot for a moment think these are your real feelings. But there is papa's carriage driving up the avenue. How glad I am! I did not expect him till to-morrow."

Upon this Mrs Ponsonby and I quitted the room, for we had too much delicacy to stay to witness the meeting between Lord St. Clair and his daughter, after the bereavement they had sustained. We did not make our

appearance until dinner was announced, when his lordship received us most graciously, and expressed much regret at having been detained so long in town. Both he and Miss St. Clair were much depressed in spirits. The whole household is in deep mourning, but as it must be nearly six months since Lady St. Clair died, I do not suppose it will be deemed necessary to seclude ourselves long. I wish I could make up my mind to leave Henley, for it is wretchedly dull, but no, if I *must* be miserable myself, I will at all events have the gratification of making others miserable likewise.

I must tell you, Almira, that I was resolved to know whether there was any truth in the report that Sir Alfred Villiers was going to be married, so the very first opportunity afforded me of speaking to him alone, I made a violent effort to subdue my feelings, and began as follows :—

“I have to offer you my sincere congratulations, Sir Alfred.”

“Miss Charlton is exceedingly polite,” said he, “but I am ignorant of the occasion.”

“Your intended marriage, of course.”

“With whom, madam?”

“How sly you are, Sir Alfred! why with the Lady Claudine, certainly.”

“Indeed! I was not aware of this myself. May I ask who was your informant?”

“O, a lady who called at Lord St. Clair’s, last week,” said I, “but do you really mean that this report is false?”

"Most assuredly I do, I have no intention of marrying."

"You mean, then, to be a bachelor, Sir Alfred," said I, determined, if possible, to discover the state of his mind.

"I have made no such vow, Miss Charlton."

"You intend only to remain so for the present, then, until you have discovered some *model of perfection*. Now, as you have travelled a great deal, in what country do you think the ladies most beautiful?"

"I have already told you what I consider most attractive in a lady—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

"Then you never look at the face at all," said I.

"O yes, I do, and am a great admirer of a pretty one."

"That is what I just asked you. Now what style of beauty do you admire most? Do you prefer the Grecian, or the English, or the Italian?"

"I really cannot say exactly, I have seen lovely women in every country."

"But did you never see *any one in particular*, whom you admired more than another?"

"I believe—" and he hesitated, "I believe I have."

"Will you describe her?" said I, "what is she like?"

"She is modest, simple, and elegant, madam, retiring in her manners, and graceful in her deportment."

"Then I think I can guess her name. Will you tell me if I am right, Sir Alfred?"

"I do not think I shall," said he, smiling, "for as

you are not my father confessor, there is no occasion for it."

"But I should keep it secret, I assure you."

"Nay, Miss Charlton, that is impossible. I do not think a lady *can* keep a secret."

"Now, really," said I, "that is intolerable. I cannot think why you should desire such secrecy, if you admire her so very much, because when you make proposals, the world *must* know."

"But it is quite possible to *admire* a young lady without having any such intentions."

"O certainly," said I, "and I dare say you will marry a methodist parson's daughter, but this reminds me of the conversation you were going to finish about attending places of public amusement. Now what is your opinion? I am dying to know."

"If you wish for my *real* opinion, I think that it must rest with every man's conscience whether or not he attends these places. If any one who is a true Christian *can* spend evening after evening in dissipation, without being reproved by the 'still small voice' within, let him do so, but you will find that as the love of holiness increases, the love of worldly pleasure diminishes."

"Why then do you so often attend concerts yourself?"

"Because I consider *music* is calculated rather to elevate and refine the mind than otherwise, and as I never allow pleasure to interfere with any known duty, I do not consider I am wrong in *occasionally* indulging myself. Recreation is necessary to every one, and when

pleasure is pursued *only* to recreate the mind, it is not sinful. It is when we are *constantly* engaged in frivolous amusements, and thereby rendered unable to attend properly to our devotions, that they prove hurtful and injurious. I will tell you the rule by which I judge how far the pursuit of pleasure is lawful. When I retire to commune in secret with my God, and feel that I can ask his blessing to attend me where I am going ; when I can return, and feel that the love of the world is not dominant ; that my affections have not been too deeply fixed on its decaying treasures, or my judgment misled by its false arguments, then I know that I am not in danger. We are all differently constituted ; some are much more easily excited than others, and therefore each individual must best know where to draw the line of separation from the world, for himself."

"And I suppose, Sir Alfred, you would make a wife do just as you do yourself."

"As I should find this a very difficult undertaking, I think I had better choose one whose tastes are similar to my own, then *making* will be unnecessary."

"I presume, from this, that you think ladies self-willed."

"We are *all* self-willed by nature, but I really think ladies are particularly so. Will you forgive me, Miss Charlton ?"

"No, I do not think I shall, because if we *are* so, it is on account of men being so tyrannical," said I.

"In this case, then, we cannot find fault with each other, can we ?"

"Why yes, certainly if you did not *first* exercise tyranny we should never be self-willed."

"And *vice versa*, Madam," said he.

"Ah! Sir Alfred, it is impossible to argue with you. I plainly see that you do not understand woman's nature: we will be *requested* but we will not be *commanded*," and so saying I left him, yes Almira, I left him, convinced that I should never be the object of his choice, and resolved that Merelina St. Clair should not supplant me. Lord St. Clair has just sent to say he is ready to accompany us during our ride on horseback, but in the evening I will again resume my pen.

IN CONTINUATION.

Once again alone, I shall proceed with this already long epistle, and if it will not weary you too much, I will relate to you with as much brevity as possible the quaint old Colonel's love tale. He dined here to day, and as every one was very mopish, I said I was exceedingly curious to hear in what manner Colonel Dalglisch had been so duped as to cause him to take such a strong dislike to our sex.

"Hem!" said he, "you seem, madam, greatly interested about *me*. I can assure you that I should relate nothing to the credit of your sex, so perhaps you had better not urge me too strongly."

"You could not possibly represent *us* in a worse light than we could some of *you*," said I, "and I do fancy your love tale must be so very amusing."

"It might not be to *all* present," said the Colonel, "besides there is a degree of weakness attributed to those who relate such frivolous things, although if I were to comply with your request it would only be to prove, that I am not a misogynist without cause."

"The Colonel certainly has been very ill treated," said Lord St. Clair, "in *one* instance, but if I am not mistaken he did not forget to retaliate."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Ponsonby, "you remind me of the old saying, 'six of one and half a dozen of the other,' but I am really anxious to hear this amour."

"Well, then," said the Colonel, giving his usual significant "hem," and taking a pinch of snuff, "since you desire it, ladies, I will tell you how I came to be bachelor. Let me consider--how shall I begin?"

A pause and two or three "hem's."

Well, once upon a time I was young and active as you are now, but that is full forty years ago. My mother used to call me handsome; whether I was or not, I must leave it for others to decide. I am aware that no vestiges of beauty remain, but that is not to the purpose. I was brought up for the church, although it was not the way my taste inclined, neither was I fit for it. I was fond of hunting, racing, shooting, and all such sports, and believe I caused my friends a great deal of anxiety, because being a *younger* son, it was necessary I should follow *some* profession, and my father objected to the army, which I earnestly desired to join. When I was about twenty years of age, I was staying at some watering place, and chance, or fate, threw me

into the society of the beautiful Rosa D——. She was lively in her manners, and made a deep impression upon me the first time I saw her. I paid her great attentions, and as they seemed agreeable, in a very short time I made her an offer, and was accepted. Months rolled away, and I proposed marriage. Rosa was not in a hurry, but as I attributed this to her modesty I continued to urge, till I obtained her consent to fix the wedding day.

Preparations were made, and a house was speedily furnished in very elegant style. My heart beat high in anticipation of the happiness in store for me. At length the auspicious morning dawned. I rose with the lark, spent at least four hours in adjusting my dress, arranged my hair in twenty different fashions before I could decide which was most becoming, went down stairs, up again to take another view of my person, read over the matrimonial service half a dozen times, knew exactly when to say "I will," jumped into my carriage, and ordered the man to drive with all possible speed. At the church door I alighted, paced up and down the aisle in anxious expectation, and conversed with the numerous friends who had assembled to witness the ceremony. Half an hour elapsed—another—and another: Rosa did not appear. I began to feel uneasy; the clergyman grew impatient; at last I concluded that some accident must have happened on the road, and I determined to go and meet my bride.

On, on we drove, till we reached the lady's house, where every thing was in the greatest confusion. Rosa

had desired her maid to call her at an early hour, but behold in the morning no Rosa was there; a letter was left on her dressing table, saying that she hoped her parents would forgive her, but she had eloped with the youth of her choice, that she had no intention of ever marrying me, and had only received my addresses as a blind, to make them believe she had given up the young man, whom they had forbidden to enter the house, but whom she had never ceased to love.

You may guess *my* feelings better than I can describe them. I had loved Rosa D—— with all the enthusiasm of *first* love, and this is how it had been requited.

Of course the minister was sent to, and the friends dispersed, *some* pitying me, and *others* laughing at me. For a time I was terribly cut up, but thinking it was of no use to yield to grief for one who had proved herself so unworthy of my regard, I resolved to marry immediately, and selected from amongst the belles a young lady of acknowledged beauty, but I soon discovered that she was a conceited, weak minded girl, fond of flattery and flirtation, and after revolving the matter in my own mind, I decided that it would be better to remain a bachelor. As I had made her an offer, it was rather an awkward piece of business, but however I told her, "I had changed my mind, and hoped she would think nothing more of what had passed." Mary's father did not mean to let me off quite so easily, and protested he would bring an action against me for breach of promise of marriage. He requested my attendance at his house for the purpose of conversation

on the subject. As I *knew* nothing in black or white could be brought against me I complied, and when I entered the room, Mr. S—, Mary (the lady in question,) Fanny, a younger sister, and a lawyer were present. I felt rather embarrassed, but summoning up all my courage, I turned to Mr. S— and said, "As my business with you, Sir, is of private nature, we will, if you please, repair to your study." "On no account whatever," said he, "if you are not ashamed of your conduct to my daughter, you need not mind who is present; besides, this gentleman, (turning to a thin meagre looking personage) is a lawyer, and will advise me how to proceed in the business."

LAWYER.—"Yes, Sir, and if we can *prove* that you have promised marriage to either of these ladies, we shall compel you to pay the damages."

"You will find this more difficult than you imagine," said I, "but you can try if you like." To tell you the truth I felt greatly annoyed at this circumstance, for Mr. S—, though immensely rich, was not of noble origin, and my relatives had considered it a degradation that I should think of forming an alliance with his daughter. What then would be their mortification to see my name in the public papers about an affair of this nature. But I knew Mary could produce no letter, so this consoled me, and made me resolve to brave it out as well as I could.

LAWYER (*turning to Mr. S.*)—"To which of your daughters did this Mr. Dalglish make an offer of marriage?"

Mr. S.—"To the shorter of the two."

FANNY (*perplexed*)—"Shall we stand up, Sir?"

LAWYER.—"No, I thank you, I can perceive the difference in your height, (*then addressing Mary*.) Can you swear that Mr. Dalglish ever made you an offer?"

MARY (*slightly blushing*).—"I can, but I would rather this unpleasant business should stop, as it is perfectly immaterial."

Mr. S. (*angrily*).—"Immaterial, indeed! Why, I refused an excellent offer for you a few weeks ago, because I understood you were already engaged. Proceed, Sir, I beg," said he, turning to the lawyer, "I'll not have my daughters trifled with."

LAWYER (*to Mary*).—"Do you remember the words Mr. Dalglish made use of, when he made this said offer?"

MARY.—"Not exactly."

FANNY.—"Nonsense, Mary, you told me every word he said, and I am sure I can remember."

"What fools girls must be!" thought I, "and so they really tell each other all the nonsensical things a man says to them when he is in love. I'll be hanged if I will make another an offer, if I once get out of this scrape."

LAWYER.—"Did you tell your sister the exact words?"

MARY.—"I believe I did, but I forgot."

LAWYER (*to Fanny*).—"Perhaps you can repeat them."

FANNY.—"O, my sister told me that Mr. Dalglish called her an angel, and said she was dearer to him than all the world beside, and a great many other things."

LAWYER.—“That is not at all to the purpose, (*then turning to Mary.*) Did Mr. Dalglisch speak in no more direct terms than these?”

MARY.—“Certainly, he asked me plainly if I would consent to link my fate with his.”

LAWYER TO ME.—“Do you deny this, Mr. Dalglisch?”

“No,” said I, “I certainly *said* so, but this does not prove that I *meant* it. When young ladies flirt, they compel us to talk in this nonsensical way to them.”

LAWYER (*to Mary.*)—“Can you not bring forward any writing, sealed or unsealed, to prove that Mr. Dalglisch was serious?”

“No,” said I, “I took devilish good care of that.”

LAWYER (*to Mr. S.*)—“Unless, Sir, it can be proved in writing, I fear I can do nothing in the business. I have a most extensive practice, and understand such matters thoroughly. *Words*, you know, Sir, are no proofs; they may be altered or misunderstood. The young lady thought that Mr. Dalglisch was in earnest,—he himself declares to the contrary—(*then rubbing his hands*)—I fear nothing can be done. Really, Mr. S., I cannot undertake this.”

MR. S. (*angrily.*)—Then some one else shall, Sir. You know nothing of your profession.

LAWYER.—“I beg your pardon, Sir, no one understands law better. I allow that this Mr. Dalglisch has behaved very unhandsomely, but you see there *must* be proof in black and white, and you can bring forward none.”

"Ha, ha, ha," said I, "I thought you would find yourselves deceived, and now I wish you a very good evening, hoping, Mr. S., that your daughters in future will not consider every attention paid them, and every foolish flattery poured in their ears, as an offer, because if they do they will make themselves appear rather ridiculous."

And now, ladies, this is the conclusion of my love tale. I did not stay to hear anything Mr. S. might have to say, for I was rejoiced this business had turned out so well for me. I need scarcely add, that I that day made up my mind to have nothing more to do with your sex, and I have kept to my determination. Soon after I entered the army, and I remained in it till I was promoted to the rank I now hold.

"Really," exclaimed Mrs. Ponsonby, "you have been truly unfortunate, and most sincerely do I pity you, but still, I argue that all are not alike, and will you be so illiberal as to entertain prejudices against us all?"

"No rule, madam, is without an exception, but you may rest assured that there are very few exceptions to this one."

"I hope you are mistaken, Colonel," answered Mrs. Ponsonby, "and you must remember that your conduct to Mary was quite as reprehensible as Rosa's was to you."

"Granted, madam, but I was deceived first."

"I never was more amused in my life," said I, "that scene with the lawyer must have been most ludicrous."

"Hem!" said the Colonel, "I did not think it very

ludicrous, I assure you, and if I had previously adored Mary, the perfect *nonchalance* with which she sat in the room during the whole of this conversation, would have quite disgusted me."

"I really think, Colonel," said I, "you ought to have been made to pay the damages, because it appears that other suitors were rejected on your account."

"No," said he, "there was no occasion for this. Mary's property was large, and it was her own conduct which made me alter my determination. It is true I *denied* having meant anything serious, but it was because I wished the affair hushed up as soon as possible, and this was the only way in which I could prevent its being made public. Had not Mary discovered the shallowness of her mind, she had, without a doubt, been my wife. If girls think that to play, and sing, and dress, and flirt, is the end of their existence, or that they can, by these means, secure the affections of a husband, they are deceived. You think me very abrupt in my manners, I dare say, and fancy that I take no notice of anything, but I can assure you there are very few who study the human character more than I do. Here and there you meet with a sensible, well educated woman. The lady before me," (and he glanced at Mrs. Ponsonby,) "is an example, but modern education is bad—conducted upon a wrong system—and very unsubstantial. Don't you think so, madam?" turning to Mrs. Ponsonby.

"After the compliment you have just paid Mrs. Ponsonby," said I, "she *must* say as you do, of course."

"I shall take no notice of your childish observation,

Miss Charlton," said that lady, with a most dignified air, "for it would not be worth my while. You know girlhood is past with me, and consequently compliments do not affect me as they would a girl; when you are my age, I hope your ideas will be more correct than they are at present. In answer to you, Colonel Dalglish, I would say that modern education *is* bad, without a doubt, and it is greatly to be deplored that so many young and lovely creatures, capable of reflection, and possessing minds that only require cultivation, should be allowed to devote the whole of their youth to pursuits which can only obtain for them the applauses of the multitude, during a few short years, but which are certainly not calculated to make them loved or valued. Yet I am not averse to accomplishments, for in the present day they are indispensable, but I think, when young ladies attempt, as many do, six or seven languages, three or four different instruments, and the whole circle of the sciences, besides every variety of fancy work, it leaves no time for the cultivation of the heart and mind, and is both preposterous and absurd."

"What a pity Sir Alfred Villiers is not here," said I, jeeringly, "I am sure he would be delighted, but for my part, I think such conversation very wearisome. I shall retire until it takes a more amusing turn." So saying, I quitted the apartment and seated myself at my desk in a very ill humour, and, lest my disorder should prove infectious, I will say, farewell."

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOSEPHINE.

LETTER XX.

MERELINA ST. CLAIR TO AGNES PONSONBY.

Henley-upon-Thames.

Oh, procrastination! thou art indeed the thief of time. Thou hast robbed me of week after week, and month after month, until my dear Agnes must begin to think, that all protestations of friendship, and professions of unchangeable love, made in by-gone days, are obliterated from memory's tablet, and that she is quite forgotten. And yet the case is far otherwise; she is still the object of my tenderest regard, and the subject of my unceasing thoughts. What excuse then shall I offer for my negligence? I will not attempt any, for apologies and excuses are unnecessary to a *friend*. I know your dear mamma has, from time to time, informed you of our proceedings at Henley, and my late griefs must be a sufficient plea for leaving your letter so long unanswered.

Now the first wild burst of sorrow is past, and the passionate overflowings of my troubled mind are stayed, the heart still aches, but the fountain is dried up, and the tears cease to flow. The storm is succeeded by a calm, and I can now think of that dear departed saint with composure. I can rejoice that she is taken from a

world which she was too good to inhabit, and in which she could never have experienced anything but woe. Fain could I indulge in the fancy that she is appointed to be my guardian angel, to shield me from the malice of evil spirits, and to point out to me the path of life.

I often wonder, dear Agnes, whether we shall know each other in heaven. I am inclined to think we shall, as it would certainly increase our happiness, and we are sure that those who, having endured much tribulation and anguish, are admitted within the gates of the "golden city," will enjoy the fullest extent of happiness which the soul is capable of.

Do you ever speculate upon what will be our employments and enjoyments in the world to come? I do till I am completely lost, and I think of eternity—the word eternity—till all power of thought is gone, and I am obliged to confess, that vast and powerful as is the mind of man, with respect to the comprehension of terrestrial things, it is "perfect littleness" when it strives to contemplate subjects that occupy only *immortals*, and to dive into mysteries, *too great, too deep* for its weak powers to grapple with.

How differently does grief affect different minds! Lord St. Clair is now as gay as ever, and never by any chance does he speak of mamma. At first he appeared much affected by her death, and when he met me, after his return from town, he folded me in his arms, a tear trembled in his eye, and he exclaimed, "Alas! poor Eleanor, she deserved a better fate."

"She did, papa," said I, "but she is happy *now*,

and all we can do, is to try and imitate her, that we may go where she is gone. Shall we read the bible together, and extract consolation from its precious promises?"

"At a more convenient season, Merelina," said he, "but at present I have the disposal of Lady St. Clair's property to attend to."

O, Agnes, will that "convenient season" ever arrive? I fear not, for worldly cares engross all his thoughts. He told me, the other day, that he "was much pleased to observe the attention which Dom Manuel Bernard de Silva paid me, and hoped I should try and render myself as agreeable to him as possible, as he thought it would be an excellent match for me."

"Lord St. Clair," said I, "your own unhappy marriage ought to be a warning. You will not wish your only child to be miserable, or force her to unite herself with a man whom she detests."

"Pooh, pooh, child," said he, "detest, indeed! you do not know anything about him. He is a worthy young man, and would make you an excellent husband. You have no other attachment, I presume?"

"No," replied I, "not any."

"Are you sure, Merelina? Sir Alfred Villiers has been very attentive to you lately, but I hope you think nothing of him, for he is a sanctified fool."

"Sir Alfred Villiers, papa," said I, has never led me to suppose that he entertains any *uncommon* regard for me, and of course I should not be so weak as to fix my affection where I was uncertain of its being returned."

Upon this he left me, and I tried to analyse my feelings. It did not require a moment's reflection to decide that Dom Manuel would be displeasing to me as a lover, and that as a husband he could not be endured.

I could not deny that I both respected and admired Sir Alfred Villiers, but still I was sure that I regarded him only as a *friend*, a kind friend who had endeavoured to soothe me in my distress and rouse my spirits, for in spite of my efforts to the contrary, I cannot help sometimes appearing dejected, when I think of what has occurred in a few short months. But a little while ago, I came to Henley all life and gaiety, foolishly fancying unclouded sunshine would gild my days. Alas! I have been convinced by painful experience that "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." All that agitates or depresses us must soon perish. Nature, all prolific and all beauteous nature, is advancing in years; her spring time is past, and the decree will ere long be issued that "time shall be no more." I say *soon*, for what is a thousand years? It is long to look forward to, I grant, but O to look back upon it; to think of all that has transpired in a thousand years seems but "as a tale that is told." O then may we ever keep in view the great end for which life was given, and may we "pass through things temporal, as neither to lose nor forget the things eternal."

I must tell you a very singular circumstance that took place a short time since, and one which has strongly excited my curiosity. I had occasion one morning to call at my jeweller's, concerning a hair chain which I

am having made of my mamma's hair. As I was standing at the counter, looking at some brooches, one of unusual beauty caught my eye. I enquired the price. The man said it was only second hand, very old fashioned, and observed that he was sure I should not like to wear it, as it was evidently a gentleman's brooch.

"No matter," said I, "it pleases me infinitely more than any other in your shop."

"You had better allow me to select another," persisted the jeweller, "for the diamonds in that brooch will render it very expensive, notwithstanding its antique appearance."

"There is no accounting for whims," I replied, "I will give any sum for that brooch, for I am resolved to purchase it."

Finding he could not dissuade me, the man mentioned the sum he required. I paid it, and returned home delighted with my prize.

Miss Charlton thought I had thrown away my money, but Lord St. Clair agreed with me in thinking it a beautiful and elegant ornament. I was placing it in the casket which I had received from Calcutta, and wondering to whom it had previously belonged, and what could have induced any one to part with it, when I saw in a little box, carefully laid on wool, a brooch exactly resembling it. Struck with amazement I took it up, hoping I might find some secret spring or something engraven which would elucidate the matter, but it was in vain that I looked: the mystery remained uncleared. I ran to papa, who was as much surprised

as myself. He advised me to send immediately for the person of whom I had purchased it. I did so, but the only information he could give me, was that he had bought it about two years since of a travelling Jew. My wonder was now increased. I could not doubt that it had belonged to some of my family, and that these two brooches had been given to my poor mamma, and her brother Alphonso, perhaps by their parents, or perhaps by some friend. Was it possible that my uncle lived and was in distress? Could any thing but actual need have led him to part with so precious a gift? The more I thought, the more I was perplexed. Lord St. Clair said it was useless to trouble myself about it, as it was most probable my uncle Alphonso had been killed in battle, and that some one had plundered the dead body, and sold their booty at some pawnbroker's shop. It may be so, but I do not feel quite so satisfied. If my uncle is dead, where is his wife, and the child he spoke of to mamma? Possibly this ornament may some day lead to a discovery of my relatives, who, for my sainted mother's sake, are rendered dear to me. At any rate I shall keep them both with the greatest care. I fear, my dear girl, I shall weary you, but when I am seated in my own little boudoir, apart from all the world, it is so pleasant to enjoy sweet intercourse with my friend through the medium of pen, ink, and paper. I am sure the inventors of such useful articles ought to have been richly rewarded, for I do not know what we should do without them. It is delightful to think we can transmit our thoughts to each other, and know what

passes in the minds of those whom we love, though far removed from them, and that we can as surely discover the state of their feelings towards us, as if they dwelt among us. A day will arrive, perhaps, when we shall once again embrace each other, but until you return from Wales, we must be satisfied with the pleasures of epistolary correspondence. Do let me hear from you soon, for your letters are most pleasing to

Your ever affectionate,
MERELINA.

LETTER XXI.

MRS. PONSONBY TO HER DAUGHTER.

Henley.

Although I have not written to you, my dear girl, for some time, you have not, I assure you, been banished from my remembrance, but my whole time has been devoted to our dear young friend, whose depression has made me entertain serious fears for her health. For many weeks after Lady St. Clair's death, she was inconsolable, and even now I observe a melancholy, which is quite foreign to her usual cheerful disposition. The contending emotions of joy, at hearing of her mamma's existence, pity at her forlorn situation,

and grief at the suddenness with which she has been taken from her, have excited her delicate frame too strongly, and she wears the appearance of a drooping lily.

His lordship has several times noticed her declining health to me, but takes what I conceive to be a very wrong method of trying to divert her thoughts. He seems bent upon uniting her to this Dom Manuel, whom you have heard us speak of before in our letters, and quite forces her into his society, which instead of *amusing* her mind, proves a new source of anxiety, because she fears lest her father should exercise his authority, and compel her to be united to one whose attentions she has told me are most disagreeable. Knowing her feelings I was well prepared to answer his lordship when he condescended to ask me the other day if I did not think it would be an eligible match for her.

I replied that "I had no right to presume to contradict him, but I could not think Dom Manuel was at all calculated for her."

"Dear!" said Miss Charlton, rudely interrupting me, "how very odd of you, Mrs. Ponsonby, I think him so very handsome."

"Yes, Miss Charlton, and so do I think him handsome, but this is not the point we are discussing. Perhaps *you* may consider a fine face ought to be the first consideration, but Miss St. Clair and you are different persons."

"Thank heaven we are," said she, "for I should not

like to be under such control as not even to be allowed to choose who I should accept and who reject."

"I think you are labouring under a mistake, for although I *advise* Miss St. Clair, I do not presume to *control* her. She is superior to Dom Manuel in every respect, and were she to ask my opinion, this is what I should tell her."

"You really do my daughter honor," said Lord St. Clair, half pleased with my compliment, and half angry at my contradiction of his favourite, "but this young Spaniard is of high family, heir to a large estate, is pleasing in his manners, and gentlemanly in his appearance. What more could be desired."

"A mind equal to her own, my Lord."

"He is not deficient in intellect either, Madam."

"And I am convinced," said Miss Charlton, "that he adores your daughter. He has spoken of her in the highest terms of commendation."

"I know no one I should like so well for a son-in-law," said Lord St. Clair, "I must confess."

"The person who could *dislike* him, must have a very bad taste," persisted Miss Charlton.

"And yet," said I, "*you* would reject Dom Manuel."

"Really, madam, you are vastly clever," said she, coloring with vexation.

"*Too* clever not to discover your motive in urging this marriage."

"My dear Mrs. Ponsonby," said his lordship, "you must not judge young people too severely. I know no motive this amiable girl can possibly have but to pro-

mote the happiness of her friend. My daughter does you great credit, and in the care you have bestowed upon her, you have rendered me infinitely your debtor, but I fear she imbibes some of poor Eleanor's nonsensical ideas, and these I wish eradicated ere they take too deep root, or the consequences to herself in this life may be fatal. I have a suspicion that she regards Sir Alfred Villiers with preference, who, though a very worthy young man in his way, is not at all what I should approve for a husband for my child. He is so over religious that if they were much together they would drive each other mad. Perhaps you may never have heard what induced him to take this freak, but it proves my words true, that religion is only intended as a resource for the disappointed and broken hearted. About four years ago, his parents, his only sister, and himself, went to spend a summer on the continent, and as they were returning to England a violent storm arose, the vessel was wrecked, and all his own family, save himself, precipitated into the deep abysses of the sea. A most shocking occurrence, and sincerely do I pity him, but I suppose he dwelt on it till his brain was almost turned, and then became *very good*. He is very rich, but this is no consideration, because Merelina will not want for money. Have you ever observed his marked attention to my daughter, madam?"

"I cannot deny that I have, but as far as I am able to judge neither Sir Alfred Villiers or Dom Manuel have succeeded in making any impression on the mind of Miss St. Clair: she is very young, and a stranger to love, I mean any thing beyond *filial* love, and as you

design to consult with me, I should say it is better not to hurry her in an affair of this nature."

Lord St. Clair seemed annoyed, but as he always pays great deference to my opinions, he was evidently unwilling I should perceive it, and discoursed upon other topics. I am sorry he so dislikes Sir Alfred, because I think he is in every way suited for Merelina, and if I am not mistaken feels a something beyond admiration for her. When we were dining at the Marquis Raimondi's one day, Merelina chanced to admire a bunch of moss roses which were in an elegant china vase. Sir Alfred, who was close by, immediately selected the most beautiful, and presenting it to her, said, "Will you do me the favor to accept this bud? It resembles yourself, for there is not a grace which it does not possess." She blushed "celestial rosy red," as he playfully entwined it amongst her glossy ringlets, and laughingly replied, "I did not think *you* were a flatterer, Sir Alfred."

"And I hope you do not think so now," said he, "for I have only expressed my genuine feelings. Is it possible?—but I see it *is* possible to possess *every* attraction, and yet be unconscious of superiority."

Several persons approached at this moment, and no more was said, but I had heard enough to convince me that if Sir Alfred could only meet with a little encouragement, he would not be long in declaring himself a candidate for the hand of Lord St. Clair's lovely daughter. Nothing would give *me* greater satisfaction, for he is a most sensible, pious, elegant young man, and

I have been excessively pleased with his sentiments whenever he has addressed himself to me. The excessive volubility of Miss Charlton gave rise on the same evening to a very interesting conversation between us. That young lady, as usual, was running on with a series of nonsenses, and engrossing the attention of a numerous circle who had assembled round her, either to make her their future sport, or to amuse an hour they scarcely knew how to employ, when Sir Alfred remarked to me that Miss Charlton did not appear to agree with the sage of antiquity, who advised us to consider "the restraint of the tongue as the first of virtues."

"No," replied I, "she has not yet learned *the art of listening*. If young people were as well skilled in this, as they are in the art of making *others listen*, conversation would be more instructive than it usually is, but when those who have lived so few years, and whose reading must necessarily be limited, talk incessantly, they must speedily exhaust their resources."

"I perfectly agree with you, madam, yet I cannot say that *I* altogether deem silence a virtue, because man was intended for a *social* animal, (and woman too, I hope)," added he laughing, "and certainly silence and sociability are incompatible, but it is deplorable to think of the hours which are worse than wasted in the most frivolous discourse. Politeness, courtesy, every thing requires that we should yield the choice of subjects to your sex.

'For when a lady is in the case,
You know *all* other things give place.'"

"True," said I, "and I fear there is some truth in the observation of our elegant Addison, when he says that 'the fair sex choose to associate with persons who resemble themselves in that light and volatile humour which is natural to them, rather than with such as are qualified to moderate or counterbalance it.' Yet I do think, indeed I am sure, *many* ladies would be pleased with rational conversation, and gentlemen pay us a very ill compliment in banishing every thing intellectual while we are present. I have heard it said that when we leave the dinner table conversation often takes a most instructive turn. Are we from this to conclude that you deem us incapable of entering into subjects which require thought?"

"By no means, madam, for I believe that amongst your sex are to be found those who surpass us in powers of thought, and without a doubt the conversation of a sensible woman is infinitely more pleasing, more refined, and more animated, than that of an equally well educated man. Your imaginations are more lively, your arguments warmer, and your nature more exquisitely feeling than ours, but how very seldom it is that such a woman is found. One here and there like 'an Oasis in a desert,' falls in our way, and excites our veneration, nay *more* than this."

"If there *are few*, which I cannot deny, it is because the end of education is mistaken. Fashion has rendered it necessary that young people, instead of resting satisfied with the attainment of excellence in *one thing*, should aim at *every thing*, and the inevitable consequence is,

that they know thoroughly *nothing*. A lady seeks for her daughter a governess—she must play with execution, sing with taste, dance with elegance, draw with correctness, and speak several languages with fluency, but is it ever asked what are her principles—what her views of time—what her hopes for Eternity? Alas! these are considerations of *minor* importance, and the dawning intellect of the infant, who with a nature prone to evil, but still capable of being inclined to good, is left to the care of one—perchance qualified for the task, but too often herself as thoughtless as the little being entrusted to her. What ensues? The child receives wrong impressions, which as youth advances take deeper and still deeper root, and with false ideas of the world and the part she is to play in it, she enters life determined to *attract notice* by the display of a few superficial acquirements. Amongst a certain class of people she succeeds, but she fails to win the regard of the good and the wise. Disappointed in her brilliant anticipations, youth merges into middle age, and she finds to her sorrow that she has learned nothing to amuse her during the autumn and winter of life. Then, dissatisfied with herself and all around her, she grows peevish and sullen, and some have even dared to plunge into that vast, unknown, incomprehensible world of spirits, vainly hoping to find there that rest which earth refused to yield them."

"Ah! happy Lord St. Clair," exclaimed Sir Alfred, "in having found *such* a friend for your daughter, but still more happy in having a daughter willing to imitate so bright an example."

"Nay," said I, "I must disclaim all praise. Miss St. Clair is not a girl of the ordinary stamp, her mind could not, *would not* have been chained down to earth, had she received ever such inferior instruction."

"She is an admirable young creature," answered he, "but I know she considers herself indebted to you for being what she is. Religion elevates the character, but especially the *female* character, beyond every worldly attainment. Unlike the votaries of dissipation, who spend their lives in dreams of fancied bliss, and sink unpardoned and unblessed into a wretched eternity, a religious woman seems to walk in a different sphere from the rest of her fellows, and is allied almost to angelic natures. I am surprised that it is not the fashion to affect *goodness* as well as other things."

"Such a fashion would be too irksome," said I, "to have many followers."

"You are right, madam. It is difficult to do what we ought when we are guided by principle, and influenced by feelings of love and gratitude to our great Creator. The gate which leads to the pathway of life is difficult to open: it is void of ornament, the entrance is uninviting, and the beauties not discoverable until you have toiled up many a weary mile; whereas, the gate which leads to the pathway of death is wide, and elegantly constructed, adorned with statues and columns, and flowers grow in rich luxuriance around it. It stands ready open, and o'er it is the inscription, 'Turn in ye simple ones who can be deceived by outward appearances.' Thousands flock to it, deluding themselves with

the hope that it will continue pleasant to the end; but O, as they hasten to the goal, thorns and briers are seen springing up, ghostly spectres rise before them, and grim death,

‘Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
Moves on with horrid strides’

to meet them, and rouses its wretched victims to contemplate their misery, and think of what they have lost, while pursuing a phantom.”

“You are so eloquent, Sir Alfred,” said I, “that I think no one could listen to you unmoved.”

“Would that I could succeed in persuading any of the blessedness of a religious life!” said he. “Would that I could convince any that religion is not a melancholy thing. I never enjoyed real happiness till I became a Christian, and since that period, I have never been really miserable, although I have had my share of trials and vexations.”

Our conversation was here interrupted by the Marquis Raimondi, who came to solicit Sir Alfred Villiers to take the second of a duet with a young lady who had been prevailed on to sing. He complied, and as I listened to the full, rich tones of his melodious voice, I could not help thinking what a happy couple he and Merelina would make, did fortune permit them to come together.

I must tell you that Lord William Charlton has arrived at Henley Villa, and is desirous of taking his daughter home, but Lord St. Clair is so pressing for her to stay, that I believe they will spend a few weeks longer here; this arrangement is much to the satisfaction of

Miss Charlton, who has evidently not given up *all* hopes of captivating "the insensible Sir Alfred," as she calls him, although I fancy she is pretty well convinced it will be a failure; and if she did not wreak her vengeance upon an innocent and unoffending girl, it would be of little consequence. She seems resolved Merelina shall not enjoy happiness she is herself deprived of, and Lord St. Clair is so blinded that he cannot see through the jealousy that lurks within her breast.

I am very anxious to return home, and have prolonged my stay very much beyond what I had intended, but whenever I speak of leaving, Merelina silences me directly, and will not hear a word about it. I hope you will come to Woodstock ere long, as this will be a plea for my quitting a house, the continued bustle of which is not congenial to my feelings, although I receive every possible attention.

And now, my dear Agnes, with my best wishes and fervent prayers, I subscribe myself

Your affectionate mother,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XXII.

SIR ALFRED VILLIERS TO HIS FRIEND THE HON.
CHARLES MELVILLE.

Henley.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

It has been said "that to know how to moderate our desires is to make a great progress in the path that leads to true happiness." Now I perfectly coincide in this opinion, and have always endeavoured to act upon the belief of it; but still you know, in spite of every effort, man's restless, discontented mind *will* sometimes wish for what is not in its possession, and earnestly desire things difficult to obtain.

I have traversed through countries renowned for their opulence, their magnificence, and their grandeur, and I have gazed on scenery more enchanting than anything the most skilful artist could have designed; I have frequented foreign courts, and been introduced to some of the richest and loveliest of women; I have wandered in oriental climes, and beheld lavish nature's choicest gifts dispersed profusely around me; I have roamed mid shady groves, and inhaled an atmosphere which from its sweetness seemed to be extracted from the choicest flowers, and I have returned to my "Father-land" con-

tented and happy, without desiring other treasures than it could yield.

One thing alone have I coveted, and that as I have frequently told you has been to find an object worthy of my affection—a girl to whom I could offer my hand and heart, whom I could make the partner of my life, and the sharer of my soul's most secret thoughts—a girl, who in the meridian of youth and beauty would voluntarily renounce the vain delights of earth, and seek for bliss in "wisdom's pleasant path," and who, surrounded by all the attractions of the world, would yet profess herself a humble follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. For such an one I have sought among the fair daughters of my native country, and among the more luxurious and pampered children of far distant lands. Imagination has pictured such a being to my view, till fancy has fed on it as a substance, and I have pleased myself with the idea of grasping it, but alas! too soon has it proved but a shadow, and disappointed feeling has sighed o'er the illusion.

I have associated with the young, the witty, and the accomplished, and for a time beheld them with admiration, but on becoming more intimately acquainted with them, I have usually discovered a weakness and a want of reflection which have compelled me to regard woman as a sportive creature of the fancy, beautiful to gaze upon, but unable to aid by her counsels, or convince by her arguments. Do not, however, mistake me. I know *many* excellent and pious women amongst those who have attained to years of maturity,

but I am speaking of the *young* exclusively, because it is from their circle that your fastidious friend must select a wife, and *these*, I regret to say, are too apt to be led away by imaginary phantoms, which in the credulity of youth they expect will yield them unfading delights.

I fancy I see you throw down my letter with impatience, and exclaim, "What means this sentimental nonsense, and what am I to infer from it?"

Patience, my dear fellow, and I will tell you, although I dare say you will laugh at me, but I would have you remember that although you are *now* bound in Hymen's chains, and the enthusiasm of your first love has subsided into a more rational feeling, time was when you were but a lover. A pretty confession this truly, if from it you conclude that *I* am in love; but mind, Charles, I do not tell you any thing of the sort. I am merely going to say that at Henley I have met with a young lady who is my *beau idéal* of perfection, and for the rest you must think what you please. After thus exciting your curiosity, it would be cruel not to satisfy it, so I will describe her.

Her name is Merelina, and she is the only daughter of Lord St. Clair, whom you know *by name* I dare say. In her I have discovered a mind superior to anything I ever imagined so young a creature could possess. Her age is not yet eighteen, and her person, though not strictly handsome perhaps, is infinitely pleasing. She is tall and slender, with soft blue eyes and long dark hair: an expression of such tender benevolence illuminates

her countenance, as at once to convince you that innocence and holiness reign within.

"Grace is in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love."

Such is my fair enchantress. It is now some months since I was first introduced to her, and during this time I have held long conversations with her, I have watched her conduct most narrowly, and I have discovered that she possesses a fund of information, and is intelligent beyond her years. Heiress to an immense fortune, and allowed to follow her own wishes almost unrestrained, the world seems yet to have no power to dazzle her, but she steadily pursues what she considers her duty, alike regardless of its favors or its frowns.

Lord St. Clair himself is a man of the world, and Miss Charlton, a young lady whom he has selected for the *vade mecum* of his daughter, is one of the most conceited, coquettish, whimsical creatures I ever met with. To the casual observer her manners in society are more attractive than Miss St. Clair's, because all that is pleasing in her lies on the surface, and displays itself on the first interview, while to know the character of Miss St. Clair, you must see her at home,—in the domestic circle,—amongst the poor and the afflicted, and then it is only by degrees you can discover how excellent her principles,—how just her views,—how pure her thoughts.

But positively I must apologise for this trial of your patience. We are so apt to imagine that what interests ourselves cannot fail to interest our friends, that we are in danger of becoming prolix.

I suppose after all this you will wonder why I do not at once proclaim myself a suitor. The reason is because I do not yet feel sure that I should be accepted, and to be *refused* would be too mortifying to be borne even from her. Never by word or look have I been able to flatter myself that I am an object of preference; in fact I seem to regard her as a creature too pure, too good, to be capable of any love save that which is divine.

I will relate a little anecdote to you, which will serve more fully to develope her character. As I was returning one morning, not long ago, from the reading rooms, a violent storm came on quite unexpectedly. Being unprovided with an umbrella, I hastened towards a cottage which stood by the road side, and tapping at the door, asked a little girl, about twelve years of age, who was busily employed in dressing an infant, whether she would allow me to take shelter there for a few minutes.

She made a very low curtsey, and said, "that if so fine a gentleman as I was did not mind coming in, she was sure I was quite welcome to remain as long as I liked, and, placing a chair for me, asked me if I would take a seat."

Notwithstanding the poverty of the inhabitants, there was a degree of neatness and comfort about the room, which convinced me they were not destitute. I asked the child "where her parents were, and whether they had any more family besides herself and the baby she was nursing."

"Father is out at work in the fields," said she, "and my eldest brother is with him, and my two little sisters are gone to the infant school. Mother is always ill, and can't work for her living, but people are very kind to us, and give us a great many things, or else I don't know what we should do. That sweet young lady is up stairs reading to her now."

"What sweet young lady?" I inquired.

"O, the daughter of that fine Lord that lives in that grand house, just before you come to Henley, but it is such a wonderful hard name, I never can remember it."

"Do you mean Miss St. Clair?" said I anxiously.

"Why la, Sir, that is the very name. Do you know her? She gives us a great many things, and sends us coals, and often comes to see mother, and reads the Bible to her, and she hasn't a bit of pride, but she talks so kind to us all. Mother didn't have no larning when she was young, and so she can't read. I can, but I've all the children to mind, so I havn't no time, and besides I could'n explain it all, as this young lady does. She talks so beautiful, Sir, that she often makes mother cry."

"Perhaps," said I, concealing my feelings, "you will let me see your mother; it may be in my power to relieve her."

"I don't hardly know whether you can get up the stairs," answered the little girl, pointing to the staircase, "but that's the way."

Impelled by curiosity to witness so interesting a scene, and feelings of a better nature too, I hope, I with

some difficulty ascended, and through the crack of the door, which was not fastened, I beheld a pale emaciated looking woman seated in an arm chair close to the fire, and by her side Merelina St. Clair, who was reading the 55th chapter of Isaiah. She had just commenced the 6th verse, and in the most gentle and winning accents, was expatiating on the blessedness of those who listen to the Gospel calls, ere yet the indulgence of continued sin has seared their consciences, and driven their incensed God to declare "that his spirit shall no longer strive with them," when I stepped forward.

Never shall I forget the bewitching confusion visible on her countenance, as she quickly laid aside the Bible, or the astonishment of the good woman, who attempted to rise.

"Nay, sweet girl," said I, "be not ashamed at being detected in such an action as this. I am happy that chance has favored me with an opportunity of discovering it," and then I proceeded to relate how I came there, and to apologise for the intrusion.

Miss St. Clair, with true humility, said she was only performing a duty in endeavouring to instruct those who had not enjoyed the superior advantages she had herself, and that she found this a most agreeable and beneficial mode of passing an hour.

"When I contemplate," said this amiable girl, "the wants and distresses of others, it makes me more sensible of the blessings I enjoy in my own more favored station, and the resignation with which many of my poorer neighbours endure 'the numerous ills of life,' makes me

ashamed that I should ever repine at my comparatively trifling vexations."

" You are happy," I replied, " in having at so early an age found out in what true pleasure consists, and in pursuing such a line of conduct you cannot avoid feeling a serenity of mind, beyond any thing which the gratification of mere worldly desires could yield you.

' One self-approving hour outweighs whole years
Of stupid staring and of loud huzzas.'

" But the shower is over, and I will intrude no longer," said I, approaching the woman, and dropping a trifle into her hand. " Will you, Miss St. Clair, allow me to see you home? I fear you will find the ground very damp."

" O," said she, " I always come equipped for any weather, I have thick shoes that are proof against such slight rain as this," and putting on her bonnet, she said she was quite ready to accompany me. We then took leave of the happy inhabitants of this humble dwelling, and I will not tell you all I felt, as I conversed with the beautiful girl who granted me such an honor. Suffice it to say that she occupied my thoughts during the remainder of the day, and how often since I am not obliged to confess, even to my old friend and confidant—Charles Melville.

You will tell me, I know, that it is weak and wrong to suffer myself to be thus occupied with any worldly object: you are right, and I intend most severely to bring myself to task. I have heard girls say that the symptoms of love are abstraction, loss of appetite,

frequent sighs, and a certain awkwardness in the society of the loved one, and as I certainly do not display *all* these, I hope my case is not yet desperate. But no more of this nonsense, or you will set me down for a fool.

Pray remember me most kindly to Mrs. Melville, and
 Believe me, as ever,
 Your's respectfully,
 ALFRED VILLIERS.

LETTER XXIII.

AGNES PONSONBY TO MERELINA ST. CLAIR.

Borrowdale.

My dear Merelina will be surprised when she sees from what place this letter is dated, but as we were all very anxious to visit Cumberland, and return home through the western counties of England, we with some difficulty prevailed upon Mr. Fitz-Williams to accede to our united request, and now here we are amid the beautiful lakes, the fertile valleys, and the foaming cataracts of this admired country. We came from Anglesea by water, and landed at Carlisle, which is rendered memorable from the historical facts connected with it. The castle, as you no doubt know, was destroyed by the Scots in the year 60, and not rebuilt

until the reign of William Rufus. Here it was that the beautiful, but unfortunate, Mary Queen of Scots took refuge after the battle of Langside, and was unjustly detained prisoner by the jealous and artful Elizabeth.

It cannot be denied that Elizabeth was a good *Queen*, and that she possessed penetration and judgment which eminently qualified her to govern a kingdom, but when I think of her as a *woman*, my admiration degenerates into dislike.

Her treatment of her unhappy cousin, who had certainly been guilty of no personal offence towards her, her vanity, and excessive love of flattery, make me look upon her as anything but amiable; and when I was shown through the apartments devoted to the accomplished, though erring, Mary, a thousand different sensations filled my mind. It is rarely that we ponder o'er the contentions which agitate mankind without discovering a degree of culpability on both sides. The Queen of Scots had committed crimes that deserved punishment. Most persons agree in considering that she was, if not the instigator, at least accessory to the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley, and she was assuredly guilty of indiscretions little becoming one whose conduct ought to have been an example to her subjects, but the defects of her character were in a great measure to be attributed to the education she had received. It was true she had been placed in one of the first convents in the French kingdom, and had made such astonishing progress in literature that her mother, Mary of Guise, and her Scottish attendants, burst into tears of joy, when

at the expiration of a year she paid them a visit, but still the French court during the regency of the crafty and unprincipled Catherine de Medici, was a very bad school for the morals, and no doubt it was here she acquired that levity and turn for gaiety so displeasing to her people, and in the sequel so fatal to herself. But while we shrink with horror at the crimes of which she had been guilty, we think of her with pity when we remember that she fled to England for protection, that she reposed confidence in her royal cousin, and that she threw herself in her power without a suspicion of her honor. Was it then womanly, was it kind, was it just to take advantage of Mary's helpless situation, and to augment her wretchedness? No, Elizabeth, no, thy conscience must have upbraided thee, and whispered that such conduct was wrong, but jealousy overcame thy better feelings, and envy, base envy of the superior attractions of *her*, who according to the laws of nations would have succeeded thee on the English throne, induced thee to consent to an act, which, long as thy name shall last, will be a stain on thy hitherto unsullied reign. But it was my intention to give you a little description of this country, and not to enter into an historical dissertation: if, however, you will pardon this digression, I will promise not to make another.

The situation of Carlisle is on an eminence, which is nearly enclosed by three streams, and a little to the right of the road to Carlisle, is Naworth Castle, formerly a baronial residence. It stands in the vale of Lanercot, and I will relate an anecdote of Lord William Howard,

a former inhabitant of this castle, to prove how great a change his government produced in the lawless men who dwelt in the district. This nobleman who was as much renowned for his love of literature, as for his attachment to arms, deemed it an enormous offence for any one to presume to interrupt him during the hours he devoted to study. One day a soldier having captured one of those border marauders called moss troopers, entered the library to enquire what should be done with the prisoner. His lordship angry at the intrusion, peevishly exclaimed, "Hang the fellow." He spoke this in haste, and merely meant that he did not choose to attend to him at that time, but his order was literally obeyed, and the unfortunate man instantly beheaded. This was carrying obedience rather too far, was it not?

About eighteen miles south of Carlisle in the vicinity of Penrith, is a high mount called "The Beacon," and though the ascent was somewhat difficult, yet how richly was I repaid, when I gazed around, and commanded a view exceeding a hundred miles in circumference. The mighty Cross-fell rises majestically on the east, to a great height, and a little below the summit of this mountain is a spring; on the north you may discover the Cheviot Hills, and at its base is the beauteous Ullswater, which receives into its bosom the clear waters of the Eamont. The echoes here are remarkable, and the sound of a cannon discharged on the banks of the lake reverberates from rock to rock six or seven times. Reluctantly I quitted this enchanting spot, and proceeded to Eden Hall, a mansion not far distant, where a drinking glass

is preserved about which the following absurd tale is told. It is said that a company of fairies once sporting near a spring in the garden, left the glass out of which they had been drinking, and just as they were vanishing uttered these words—

“If that glass either break or fall,
Farewell to the luck of Eden Hall.”

How thankful we ought to be that we live in more enlightened times, and that superstition with all its baneful effects is losing its sway over the minds of men. There is something so heathenish in superstition; it seems to imply that there is no over-ruling Providence to direct us, but that we are at the mercy of the most trivial circumstances for our happiness and misery. But to proceed with my tour, (but not in any regular order, for I have not time for this). At Keswick I visited the far famed lake of Derwentwater, where the surrounding scenery is so exquisite that I shall not attempt to describe it. Mountains assuming a thousand fantastic shapes, woody eminences, pastoral margins, and tiny islands present to the delighted view every possible variety of prospect. In the pass of Borrowdale, through which the river Derwent rushes, is the celebrated Bowder Stone, of great size, and resembling in its appearance a large ship resting on its keel; it is supposed to have fallen from Castle Crag, a detached mountain, which received its name from the fortress that in days of yore crowned its summit.

How greatly would it enhance my pleasure if you were sharing the rich feast here prepared for the ad-

mirer of nature, because you possess a soul capable of enjoying such treats: your enthusiastic love of the romantic and marvellous would I think be gratified even to satiety, and I am not sure that you would not covet the life of the hermit on the Floating Island, near Lowdon Waterfall. Had you never seen Sir Alfred Villiers, I feel persuaded this would be the case, but really I cannot help thinking he is rather more than a friend notwithstanding all your protestations, and from what I hear of him I am inclined to regard him as *un homme parfait*.

I hope, dear, you will come and see me as soon as I am settled at ——, or will you be unable to exist at such a distance from Henley. Remember the words of my favourite little song—

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder,”

and just try if you can bear a month's separation. I think the change of air would be beneficial to your health, and I need not tell you how honored both Wallace and myself would feel by your company. In another week I expect to be at Clifton, and then, Merelina, very shortly after, I believe I am to exchange the light-heartedness of girlhood for the tender anxieties of the wife. I cannot tell you all I feel on this occasion, pleasure and pain combined, a strange conflict of widely different emotions.

That the richest blessings may be showered on your youthful head, and that you may enjoy lasting happiness, is the sincere prayer of

Your ever unchangeable

AGNES.

LETTER XXIV.

AGNES PONSONBY TO HER MAMMA.

Clifton.

MY EVER DEAREST MAMMA,

After a most delightful excursion, I find myself once again in Somersetshire. If I were to pursue my own inclinations, I should return directly to our own sweet cottage, for far from being dissatisfied with that spot where I have passed so many happy years, I am more fully persuaded than ever that should we roam to earth's remotest bounds in search of pleasure we should find "no place like home, sweet, sweet home." But to persist at all times in indulging only our own gratification, without consulting the wishes of others, is selfish, and I think if you were near, you would advise me in the present instance to yield to the importunities of my friends. When I was sitting with Aunt Fitz-Williams the other day, Wallace came in, and taking my hand said, "Now, dear Agnes, I trust you will no longer delay what I have so long and so ardently desired. I see no objection which you can possibly offer to our immediate union, as the living of —— is now in my possession, and the house quite ready for our reception. Will you then allow me to fix an early day for our wedding, and suffer me to claim that title, which will

justify me in paying you those peculiar attentions my love inclines me to?" I blushed, and said I would comply with his wishes, but I should like to return to Woodstock first, as I should prefer being married from my own house.

"If," said he, "you are peremptory, Agnes, I will offer no objection, but we have neither of us any relatives residing there except your mamma, who I am sure will consent to come here, when she knows how greatly we desire it. It will give her an opportunity of meeting a sister whom she has not seen for many years. Emily is to be united in a few weeks to young Siddons, and let us render the day memorable by a double marriage. My family will be deeply hurt if they are not present at the nuptials of so important a personage as myself, and if it will not be very disagreeable to you, we shall all so much prefer your remaining with us."

"O!" said my Aunt, "we cannot part with you, indeed, Agnes, I shall write to my sister, and tell her how I have arranged every thing. I shall request her to favor us with her company as soon as possible. Mr. Fitz-Williams will not go out any more now the winter is approaching, I am sure, and we wish to be together on such an occasion as the marriage of our only son."

To such arguments as these I could find no answer, so I promised to let it be as they wished if you approved of it. Not doubting that you will, my aunt is preparing for your reception, and I hope, my dear mamma, you will not fail to hasten to your Agnes, who earnestly longs to see you.

I cannot deny that I am happy in anticipation of being united to so amiable and worthy a young man as Wallace Fitz-Williams: he is so good, so kind, and so clever, that not to love him would be to confess myself insensible: still my joy is chequered at the thought of the responsibilities that will devolve upon me as the wife of a young clergyman. Men are apt to fancy themselves our superiors, and in the indulgence of this idea they expect a degree of deference and submission which we are not, perhaps, at all times willing to yield them: as a consequence, dissensions ensue which sometimes terminate unpleasantly, and those who by a little mutual forbearance might have lived together in sweet harmony, become miserable, and almost detest each other. Yet, I believe that a great deal depends upon our sex: we possess power, if we will but exercise it discreetly, and I should think no man of the least sense or generosity would refuse a suitable return of love to the woman who spent her life in endeavouring to render him happy. If he did, he would be worse than a brute.

Some men, however, are so overbearing and tyrannical, that it is impossible to please them. I am sure unless my aunt was a most amiable woman she could not live peaceably with Mr. Fitz-Williams, for he is constantly thwarting her, and is so coarse minded and illiberal in his opinions, that I could not bear him; yet she endures all his waywardness with angelic sweetness, and the world calls them a happy couple. They *may* be so, but if my Wallace does not repose more confidence in me, and treat me more as a companion, I shall wish myself

single many times. It has been well observed, "that happiness in all its height, or misery in all its depth, must be the lot of every votary of Hymen," and highly beneficial would it be for every one to consider and remember the following piece of salutary advice—

“ Pause, ponder, sift—not eager in thy choice,
Nor jealous of the chosen—fixing, fix,
Judge *before* marriage—then confide till death.”

But were I to tell you all my hopes and fears I should quite weary you, and as in a few days I hope to be once again fondly pressed to your bosom, I shall reserve what more I have to say till that time.

Do not disappoint me, for the thoughts of being separated from you, and of being left to depend upon myself, almost out-balances the joy I ought to feel on this occasion.

Pray remember me kindly to Merelina, and tell her I hope to receive a letter from her very shortly. Dear girl, how often has she thought those unkind and cold hearted who have represented the world to her in an uninviting aspect. But alas! the curse of mortality has overtaken her, and the chilling blast of disappointed hope has blown o'er one, whose gentleness and sweetness of disposition seemed to entitle her to a portion of this world's happiness, but “all things work together for good to them who love God,” and had it not been for the trials she has been called upon to endure, she might have been fascinated by the world's alluring joys. Let our situation be what it may, it is ordered by a Wise and Holy Being, who is acquainted with the secret

workings of each individual mind, and knows whether prosperity or adversity will be most propitious to our eternal welfare. Anxiously awaiting your arrival,
I subscribe myself,

Your ever dutiful daughter,

AGNES.

LETTER XXV.

MRS. PONSONBY TO MERELINA.

Clifton.

MY DEAR GIRL,

Am I wrong in fancying that whatever concerns me or my dear Agnes, the playmate of your infancy, and the friend of your youth, will be interesting to you? I think not. I think I cannot so entirely have mistaken your character, and therefore embrace the earliest occasion afforded me of telling you that the fondest wishes of my heart are crowned in seeing the child, whose welfare has absorbed all my thoughts, rendered happy. True, I have experienced a pang in renouncing, what until after the marriage of her children, is a mother's peculiar privilege—I mean the claim of their first love, their first thoughts. And now though

there is an object who engrosses more particularly the affection of my child, still I hope, I flatter myself I shall never be disregarded or forgotten, and when my earthly race is run, and I am about to bid adieu to sublunary scenes, it will afford me consolation to think she has a protector. When her father died, she was too young to know the extent of her loss, or to comprehend my feelings, and even now she is not aware of all I have had to contend with since I was deprived of this valued friend. The loss of my wealth was but a trifling misfortune, for nature requires not magnificent palaces, or costly attire, or sumptuous fare. The mad schemes which are formed to obtain grandeur, and the wild chimeras which are indulged in, by a disordered imagination, are not conducive to happiness. True felicity consists more in tranquillity of mind than any thing else. "Contentment is the grand secret of human bliss," and though we bask in the sunshine of prosperity all our days, and be decked in the richest gems that foreign climes can yield: though riches and their usual accompaniment, the homage of the world, are accorded us, what—what is all without content? The discontented poor man has health—but he desires gold; the discontented rich man has gold—but he covets fame; the discontented warrior has fame—but he craves after domestic peace; and so through every grade of life we shall find, that until the love of God reigns supreme in the heart, and our passions are brought under subjection, we shall ever be panting after something that is denied.

My husband was my idol, and while he lived I had

not a care, but death, "that cruel despoiler," robbed me of my treasure, and brought me to depend more entirely upon my Creator, and all I wish now, is to see you and my own dear girl enjoying those pleasures which for a few short years of youth fall to the lot of nearly every human being.

The nuptials of my Agnes with her Wallace, and Emily with Siddons, were celebrated with great pomp, rather more pomp than I approved of, but Mr. Fitz-Williams said he had only one child left single, and that such a thing could never happen again in his family, consequently he was resolved every thing should be conducted in the first style. To me it was an imposing and affecting ceremony to see two young creatures, taking upon themselves vows, the nature of which they yet scarcely comprehended. How many are there who promise at the altar to love and cherish each other, and ere the expiration of many months, behave as if they detested to be in each other's society, and seem to experience pleasure in offering contradiction and annoyances.

An elegant breakfast was prepared, at which numerous friends assembled, and soon after the newly married couples departed—Mr. and Mrs. Siddons for Scotland, and Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-Williams for the Isle of Wight.

I promised Agnes that I would write you the particulars, as she said she might not have an opportunity of doing so for some little time, but she begged me to say that if you would address a letter to her, to be left

at the —— Hotel, she should be sure to receive it in safety.

With my best wishes and sincere love,

I am, as ever,

Your devoted friend,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XXVI.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Henley-upon-Thames.

MY DEAR AGNES,

Suffer me to embrace this opportunity of congratulating you upon having become one of those important personages—a bride, and to wish you all the happiness such a situation can yield you. Now that I have lost your dear mamma, I feel more lonely than ever. There is not a creature in this house to whom I can open my mind, not one who feels as I do, or who sympathises with me. Surrounded by every luxury which a superfluity of wealth can procure, I know I ought not to repine, yet how gladly would I resign all this magnificence for some retired little cot amongst those who loved me. Ah! Agnes, I have offended my dear papa—he who has ever treated me with the greatest

kindness, and manifested the most tender concern for me—he who has never before spoken a harsh word, now frowns when I meet his glance, and refuses to pay me those many attentions which have endeared him so much to me.

My offence consists in having refused the addresses of Dom Manuel. We have lately been much thrown into each other's society, and by some unfortunate chance I have always been doomed to sit near him, or to ride in the same carriage, or some such thing, and probably from this papa may have fancied he was agreeable to me, but as far as I have been concerned it has been quite accidental, and he being one of those giddy young men who are always talking—more frequently nonsense than sense, I did not think he meant any thing particular; and now, although he has made me an offer, I am convinced it is my estate, and not myself, which he admires.

Be that as it may, he thought proper to ask Lord St. Clair's consent to our union, concluding, I suppose, that I was a cipher, and had no right to be consulted upon the subject, and papa confirmed this idea by granting it, and entering into arrangements about pecuniary matters.

When they had settled every thing in a manner quite satisfactory to themselves, Dom Manuel condescended to write to me, and to tell me that Lord St. Clair offered no opposition to his wishes. But as I did not consider myself like an article of furniture, to be bought or sold at pleasure, and as I did not entertain even common regard for him, I ventured to decline the honor he in-

tended me, stating that I had no intention of changing my situation at present, and that even if I had, I felt myself unable to bestow my affection upon *him*.

I do not think he cared in the least for the denial, but when papa heard of my proceedings, his anger knew no bounds. He said I was an ungrateful, obstinate girl, and that he would have nothing more to do with me. He told me that he had tenderly loved me, and to establish me well in life had been his first care. I had been solicited of him, by a man who was all the most ambitious woman could desire, and I refused to comply with his wish.

"Then, dear papa," said I, "I must be ambitious indeed, for he is not all that *I* desire. I will obey you in every thing else, but I cannot marry a man who has not the same views as I have myself. If I were to do so, I should doubtless be like my own poor mamma, separated in the course of a few years, and you would not like this, would you?"

Tears filled his eyes at this strong appeal to his feelings, but "still the world prevailed." Dom Manuel was allied to royalty, and to have acknowledged him for a son-in-law, would have gratified his pride. "I have looked for happiness in my child, but I am disappointed," said he, and he left me.

I wept bitterly, and my heart seemed as if it would break. I thought sorrow was to be my inheritance through life, and in my grief I almost dared to wish for death, but it was only for a moment that I suffered so impious a wish to lodge in my bosom. "I cried unto

the Lord in my distress," and he listened to me : he sent comfort into my soul, and brought to my mind the precious promises of the ever blessed Gospel. I resolved to appear cheerful, and to study papa's wishes with greater devotion than ever. I could not encourage Dom Manuel as a lover, because I did not consider it my duty, but I determined to meet him as a friend, to stifle my own feelings of dislike, and to try if it were possible to inspire him with a desire after holiness.

I have pursued this course for some weeks, but nothing avails. Lord St. Clair is still unkind, and more particularly so in the presence of Miss Charlton, who seems to possess unlimited sway over him. She is so artfully fascinating, that she completely manages him, and I have to thank *her* for all I now endure. It is she who has represented to him the advantages of this union : it is she who has termed my refusal obstinacy ; it is she who has rendered my home miserable. She envies me the attention I receive, and she would do any thing to get me out of the way ; yet why—why does she disturb herself ? I would not deprive her of any one she preferred. I court not the admiration—I seek not the favour of any. I wish only for domestic happiness. Were she to leave Henley, I think I could conciliate papa ; but now, if for a moment he forgets his displeasure, she ingeniously introduces the young Spaniard, and all his feelings of anger are rekindled. This is the girl who calls herself my *friend*, and who professes to have my interest at heart.

O heaven ! I invoke your aid to preserve me from

the unsanctified passions of hatred and ill-will, but I will not deviate from the path of virtue, then do I hope I shall at last find peace. This life is a school of misery—our comforts few—our pleasures transient. The time of our trials is the shining time of our virtue, and “our present afflictions, though not joyous, but grievous, work out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory;” and sorrows which a misjudging world would have deemed insupportable, prove to be “refining vessels.” Still the cup of affliction is bitter. O my friend, advise me, comfort me, pray for me. Is there no kind pitying angel near to commiserate with me? But hark! I hear a sound of music more than mortal; the most dulcet tones reverberate in my ears. Methinks 'tis like some heavenly anthem; O, excursive fancy, to what dost thou lead me?——
I hear it still: it seems to proceed from my grotto! I will go and see.

IN CONTINUATION.

I put on my bonnet, and hastened to the spot from whence the sound appeared to issue: not a footstep could I trace, not a creature could I see. I turned from my grotto, and walked up a long shady grove, at the end of which is a gate leading into a wood, and through the grating I descried a young man—the same young man who had for some days annoyed me by constantly passing and repassing before me in my walks. He was playing on a little wind instrument surpassing in mellowness of tone anything I had ever before heard.

He was apparently about two or three and twenty years of age, tall, pale, and slender, with an expression of dejection and wildness on his countenance that gave him almost the appearance of a maniac. He was dressed very shabbily, but still there was an elegance in his person which seemed to indicate that he had not always been in such a situation. Not knowing his intentions I was about to utter a scream, when in the most imploring accents he besought me to be silent, and throwing a piece of paper over the gate, instantly disappeared. I picked it up, and to my astonishment perused the following words :—

“O thou who art loved by the rich, and blessed by the poor, and whose benevolence is the theme where'er I go, lend a gracious ear to the woes of an unhappy stranger. With *thee* rests the power of rescuing me from ruin. Deign then, O lady, to meet me here at the same hour to-morrow, and I will relate to you a tale that will make your young heart ache. You may rely upon the honour of an unfortunate youth whom fortune persecutes, but my life will depend upon your secrecy. The most urgent distress induces me to solicit your bounty, and if you betray the confidence I repose in your goodness, you will drive me at once to terminate my misfortunes by an act of suicide.”

I returned to my own apartment utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of this mysterious billet, and undecided what course to pursue. Prudence would have induced me to go immediately to Lord St. Clair, and relate this adventure, but then I was so strictly enjoined,

almost commanded not to do so, and the consequence appeared so dreadful, that I dared not. Besides, Lord St. Clair might have been angry and have forbidden me to take any notice of it, and had I subjected myself to *receive* such an order from him, my sense of duty would have compelled me to attend to it, yet my curiosity was so strongly excited that I felt I could not rest until it was satisfied; I could think of nothing else all day, nor could I sleep at night: imagination conjured up a thousand romantic stories, and then discarded them all as improbable. At length the morrow dawned. I had thought of the impropriety, if not positive imprudence, of meeting a young stranger alone, and in such a secluded spot, till I wavered whether or not to go; but again I read the note—it declared that it was in my power to relieve a suffering fellow creature—should I refuse?

Prudence and compassion had a struggle, the latter triumphed, for a scheme entered my head which I instantly put into execution. I went to the gardener and told him I wished my grotto tastily filled with some of the choicest plants, and requested him to employ the day in arranging them, and in laying out two or three little fancy beds around it. By acting thus, I felt that I could gratify myself without danger, for though the gardener would not be within view, he could not fail to hear me, in case I should be frightened. My fears being quieted on this point, a new difficulty arose. We were going to have a large dinner party, and among the guests were to be Dom Manuel, Sir Alfred Villiers, the Marquis Rai-

mondi, with his amiable daughter, and many others to whom I have not introduced you. The hour appointed for this *rencontre* would be just the time when the company would be arriving, and my presence required, but as I knew papa and Miss Charlton (who is almost as much mistress as myself), would be present, I was visible in the drawing-room for a few minutes, and then ventured to absent myself, remembering that etiquette banishes all excess of ceremony.

Ready equipped for dinner, I threw a large mantle over me, and hastened to the place of rendezvous, where I found the youth waiting for me in a suppliant posture. My heart beat so violently, and I was so agitated, that I thought I should have sunk to the ground. I believed he perceived it, for he instantly addressed me.

"Madam," said he, "heaven will repay you for this kindness. I almost feared you would refuse my request."

"I do not know," said I, in a tremulous voice, "that I am right in acceding to it, but I wish every distressed person in Henley to be relieved if possible, although I confess I should have been better pleased had you solicited bounty of Lord St. Clair, my father."

"Pardon me, Lady," interrupted the youth, "it is you *alone* who can grant the boon I ask."

"Your conduct," said I, is inexplicable, and most mysterious—inform me speedily what you require, or I must depart."

"Alas! Madam, the loss of all my worldly goods, and the want of daily food to satisfy the cravings of nature, have driven me to commit a crime, for which the laws of

my country will sentence me to transportation if I am discovered, and bring reproach and infamy upon the hitherto unsullied name of ——— but no, I cannot stoop to tell you this. I parted with all I possessed, and then ‘stern necessity’ made me become a robber, yet think not that I yielded at once, no, I endured many a conflict within, and conscience thundered in my ears, and tried to check the horrid deed, but, O lady, I was nursed in the lap of luxury, and accustomed in my childhood to have my every whim humoured, my every desire gratified—and now—now—” said he, while tears rolled down his pallid cheeks,—“see to what I am reduced. O God! that I should ever come to this!”

In spite of all my efforts, I could not repress my sobs at this heart-rending tale. “I pity you,” said I, “most sincerely do I pity you, but what has induced you to confess your crime to *me*, and why do you think I can relieve you more than another.”

“Ah! yes, you *can* betray me I know. I am sought for in every part of the kingdom, and fly from place to place to avoid detection. If you surrender me, look,” uttered he, presenting a brace of pistols, “I can escape you *so*, but you look like an angel of light, and your countenance beams with such benevolence that I have *dared* to trust you. In answer to your other question I would say that you have in your possession a brooch which once was *mine*,—yes *mine*. You start, but if I had seen that brooch which has fastened your shawl for the last few days, in any quarter of the globe, I could have sworn to it. You have thought me rude, for so

frequently throwing myself in your way, but my motive has been that I might examine it more closely, and now I am sure it is the same. O restore it to me, and I will bless you while life remains."

As he spake these words, which almost struck me dumb with astonishment, who should I see but Sir Alfred Villiers approaching me. I scarcely know who was most frightened, the stranger or myself, but hastily taking a sovereign from my purse, I slipped it into his hand, exclaiming, "Take this; I can hear no more. Fly! begone! I will meet you here the day after tomorrow, at the same hour." He muttered a blessing, and vanished.

Sir Alfred, who had caught sight of him, was just turning away, as if he feared he was an intruder, when I quickened my pace, but my eyes were red with weeping, and my whole frame in such an agitation, that I could not articulate a syllable.

He kindly relieved me by saying, "You have been playing truant, Miss St. Clair. The last dinner bell has rung, and the lady of the house was nowhere to be found. Alarmed at your absence, three or four gentlemen resolved to commence a search, and I have been so fortunate as to discover the lost treasure."

"Indeed," said I, blushing deeply, "I did not know it was so late; I did not hear the bell: I ought to apologize to my guests for this rudeness, but—but—"

"You had a little appointment of a more pleasing nature, Miss St. Clair. Will that do?"

"No, Sir Alfred, not of a *pleasing* nature, I assure

you. You will think me very strange, but will you forbear mentioning who you have seen?"

He looked at me with astonishment, but in a moment replied, "Certainly, I will not divulge a lady's secrets."

"You are mistaken," said I, "if you think that —"

"Nay," answered he, "I do not desire you to confess more than is agreeable."

O Agnes, I cannot tell you my feelings at this moment. I knew what he fancied, but could I tell him the truth? Could I expose an unfortunate stranger for the sake of justifying myself? My conduct, though *ostensibly* imprudent, was not *really* so, and the consciousness of my innocence inspired me with courage. I said in a firm tone, "I have nothing to confess, Sir Alfred, but I did intend the meeting you witnessed to have been a profound secret. The young man you beheld me with is unhappy, and I wish to relieve him, but if you will avoid any allusion to this circumstance you will greatly oblige me, as it might involve him in ruin, and incur towards myself the severe displeasure of my parent." I coloured so immoderately, and looked so confused as I attempted this explanation, that I believe it only awakened stronger suspicions in his mind, for he said in a tone that went to my very heart, "Your wishes, Miss St. Clair, shall be obeyed."

He has ever treated me with the utmost tenderness, and in all my griefs he has comforted me: when I have needed advice, he has given it; when I have required consolation he has bestowed it. He has spoken of filial obedience to me, as one of the highest virtues, and has

always admired me for consulting papa in the most trivial matters, and now that I should be obliged to lower myself so much in his opinion as to request him to keep a secret for me ; that he should discover me in a stolen visit to a stranger, and I unable to explain its nature—what *must* he have thought of me!—what *does* he think of me to this hour !

But to proceed with my narration. When we arrived at the house, the gentlemen had all returned without being able to discover my hiding place, and papa was in the greatest consternation. As soon as he perceived me, “ Meselina,” said he, “ where can you have been, my dear ? How very odd of you to run away ? ”

“ How very odd of you to be alarmed, dear papa,” said I, assuming a gay tone, and resolved to get out of this dilemma as well as I could. “ I wanted to give a few orders about some flowers, and thought I should have had time to walk to that part of the grounds and back without being missed. I am exceedingly sorry to have created such disorder, but it was a little whim which I thought I could have indulged in, without being attended by such *serious* consequences.”

Lord St. Clair appeared rather amused on my saying this. Josephine, with her accustomed *naïveté*, remarked, that she should have imagined it must have been something more than a *flower* which had power to draw me out at so unseasonable an hour, and all the company laughed but Sir Alfred Villiers. He looked at me almost sternly, and I knew the cause. He doubtless accused me of having uttered a base falsehood, and of practising

deception upon a kind parent, and I was not permitted to tell him that it was only a justifiable evasion. Overcome by my feelings, I could not meet his eye without betraying emotion, and he, concluding it was an emotion of shame, studiously avoided me during the remainder of the evening.

How hard it is to know that we are suspected of what we feel conscious we could never be guilty, but why should I care for what Sir Alfred Villiers, or any one else thinks of me. I hope I am doing a good action, and it matters little what is the opinion of the world.

I am most intensely anxious to meet this stranger again. Surely he must be mistaken about the brooch, but his misfortunes have awakened all my sympathy, and if it is in my power to benefit him, I will do so, even though it subjects me to such unpleasantness.

I will write to you again as soon as possible after I have heard the conclusion of this tale, which as yet is shrouded in a veil of mystery.

In the meantime, accept the love of

Your ever affectionate

MERELINA.

LETTER XXVII.

HON. MISS CHARLTON TO THE BARONESS DE ROSNY.

Henley.

MY DEAR ALMIRA,

Miss St. Clair and I have just returned from a morning call, and I cannot forbear giving you a description of the pretty Lady Fortescue and her delightful children. Good heavens! how I abominate a spoiled child! We were received with all the ease and elegance natural to a woman of fashion, but we had not been there long before a tall, awkward looking girl, apparently about twelve years of age, entered the room, and slightly curtseying, threw herself down on a sofa, exclaiming in a peevish tone of voice, "I declare, mamma, I'll never forgive Frank as long as I live; he took my little spaniel out yesterday, and made it go into the water just to amuse him, and it has caught such a dreadful cold. It will not eat anything. I would rather fifty times have caught cold myself. Do you hear, ma," said she, raising her voice, as she observed that lady continued talking to us, without paying much attention to what she was saying.

"Yes, love," at length answered Lady Fortescue, "I am very sorry. Frank is a sad naughty boy, but you must ask nurse to wrap it in some new flannel, and give it something warm."

"She has already done so, and my dog is no better.

What shall I do? I wanted to take it to Miss Wilkins's to-morrow."

"Never mind, dear; it can go another time." (*Then turning to us,*) "I was going to ask what you think of the new work on Phrenology."

"You never listen to me, mamma: it is very unfeeling of you to go on talking, but I vow I won't go without my dear little dog."

"Catherine has benevolence largely developed," said Lady Fortescue, addressing me. "She cannot bear to see anything unhappy or in pain. Come here, love, and let me show Miss Charlton how very prominent this is."

"Indeed, ma, I'm not going to be stared at, I can assure you. Go out of the room, Frank; you shall not come here to-day, sir," (*seeing her brother peeping in at the door.*)

"Do not be unkind to him; he will not do so any more, dear," said Lady Fortescue.

"But I want to see Maria Wilkins so much. She always knows the fashions sooner than any one else, for her governess says this is more important than anything for a young lady in her station, and I think so too, and now I shall not be able to go for several days you know, mamma. Do you know she has acquired the Grecian bend exactly, and her singing master says she can make a shake better than any one he teaches, but then she sits two hours a day practising."

"Who *is* her singing master?" said Lady Fortescue. "I should not like you to be eclipsed in so *important* a branch of your education."

"I don't know his name, but he is an Italian. However it is of little consequence, because I can waltz a great deal better than she can. I know the German step. Look!" said Miss Catherine, dashing aside the chairs, and figuring round the room. "I say, ma, I'm determined to have a new pony, for Maria goes out with her brother every morning, and I can certainly ride as well as she can. You must ask papa, and remember if he refuses, I'll not learn that piece of music he admires so much. I shall get over him so."

"Hush! dear," said her mamma, "you should not talk so." (*Then turning to Miss St. Clair.*) "Our children know how to manage us completely, but we do not like to make them cry; it destroys the eye lashes, and spoils the brilliancy of the eye. They are both highly talented, only sometimes they are a little troublesome. Catherine, love, play that Fantasia of Thalberg's you have just been learning, will you?"

"Ah! I'll make you stare," said Miss, seating herself at the piano, and rattling off twenty pages in less than seven minutes. "What do you think of that? My governess says I play it admirably."

"Admirably, indeed!" thought I, "admirably *fast!*"

"Now I'll call Frank to sing a duet with me," (*rising and opening the door*), "Frank, come in, I want you."

"No, that I shan't, I know," said a stupid looking boy, about a year younger than his sister. "You wouldn't let me come in just now, so I don't intend to please you now."

"There's a naughty boy, ma, isn't he? Make him come in."

"Frank, dearest!" said Lady Fortescue, approaching him, "do come and sing, and then I will buy you that pretty new rocking horse you wished so much for. These ladies are so fond of music; they would be delighted to hear you. Do you know," said she, "my little boy can sing any air after he has heard it once. The organs of "time and tune" are immensely large. I took him to the celebrated ——, who tells me he is quite a genius."

"Yes!" roared the boy, "but I don't mean to sing to-day, I can tell you."

"Never mind, replied Miss Catherine, "I will sing alone. This is a beautiful song," (*taking one in her hand,*) "but I have a little cold; however I'll try if I can manage it."

"If you do, no one shall hear you, for I'll scream all the time," said Frank, commencing to exercise his lungs in such a manner that I thought I should have been deafened.

"Fie! naughty children!" said their mamma, I do not know when they have been so rude. They are such sweet tempered children do you know Miss St. Clair, they never quarrel, and so very affectionate they cannot bear to be apart from each other, can you dears?" (*turning to them.*)

"I know I wish Catherine was a hundred miles off," said Frank, "for she is always scolding me."

"And I wish you were at school, sir," answered his

sister, "but papa says you shall go after Christmas."

"Ah! you do not mean that I know," interrupted their mamma, "only you are vexed with one another. Don't you think Henley a very dull place, Miss Charlton?" addressing me. "There is so little society in the neighbourhood."

"Very little, indeed, ma'am, but I think of returning to London very shortly, and hope to prevail on Miss St. Clair to accompany me; she will be moped to death if she remains here all the winter."

"Does not his Lordship intend to visit the metropolis this season?" said Lady Fortescue to Miss St. Clair.

"I really do not know," replied she, but I hope not, for I am fond of retirement, and consider *this* place almost too gay."

"I really think," said I, we shall hear of Miss St. Clair taking the veil soon; she is quite a recluse."

"I fear you will injure your health, my dear Miss St. Clair, if you indulge in such low spirits. I do not like young people thinking so much of religion," said Lady Fortescue.

"It is religion alone which makes me happy," replied Merelina, "without *that* I should indeed be miserable, but it is time to take our leave of you."

Upon this we arose, and wished her "good morning." I praised her children, and called them "charming little creatures," which appeared to gratify her exceedingly, but I did not forget during our ride home to utter many invectives against them.

I must tell you that my papa has come to fetch me

home, but I do not intend leaving just yet. I have succeeded beyond all my expectations, and will finish, if possible, what I have commenced.

Almira, I am a disappointed girl, and she who has succeeded in winning the affections of the only person I ever did, or ever can love, shall feel all the weight of my revenge. I have at length succeeded in detecting Miss St. Clair guilty of an imprudence which I shall turn to my own advantage: in fact, I have already done so. For many days I had observed that she always went out at one particular time, and walked to the same part of the grounds. Curious to know her motive, I watched her, and discovered one day a young man in earnest conversation with her. I could not hear what they said, but I fancy it was some one in distress, whom she was relieving, and of course took no notice of it.

A few mornings ago, I asked her if she would take a little walk, but she declined, saying she had an engagement at home, so I went alone. It was my fate to meet Sir Alfred Villiers walking with his cousin; they accosted me, and after enquiring after my health, expressed their surprise at not seeing Miss St. Clair with me.

"I could not induce her to accompany me," said I.

"She is generally so fond of a walk," observed Lady Claudine.

"Yes," said I, "but I cannot think what has possessed her lately; she never walks beyond the park."

Sir Alfred bit his lips; whether he had seen what I had or not I cannot say, but he looked as if he knew something about it.

"I dare say," said Lady Claudine, "she misses Mrs. Ponsonby. Let us call upon her, Alfred, and invite her to walk with us."

"Do," answered I, "perhaps she may yield to *your* persuasions, although she would not to *mine*."

"Perhaps," said Sir Alfred, "we shall be considered intruders."

"I cannot think this," I replied, anxious to surprise her, and hoping she might be with her *inamorato*, as I call this stranger, "do pray let us go."

Upon arriving at the house, we were told Miss St. Clair was not at home, but no one knew where she was gone.

"How very odd!" said I, "not half an hour ago she refused to walk with me. I will ask the gardener if he knows which way she went; probably we may meet her."

I did so; but the only information he could give us was that he had seen her walk up the grove leading to the wood.

Sir Alfred now frowned, and said, "It is exceedingly inquisitive of us, Claudine, to pursue Miss St. Clair; she may have some appointment."

"That is highly improbable," observed Lady Claudine, "she is the last person who would act in such a way."

"She is usually very circumspect," said I, "but her conduct is inexplicable. Why did she not wish me to be with her?"

"I cannot reply to that question," said Sir Alfred,

and he urged his cousin to return home immediately.

Now although I am sure this is no love affair, if I can but succeed in making him think so, my end will be gained. He is much too proud to think of any one whose affections he believes to be placed elsewhere, and now that scrutinizing Mrs. Ponsonby has left, I can do pretty well as I please, for Lord St. Clair thinks me a divinity, and Merelina herself is much too artless and inexperienced to suspect my designs.

Adieu ! from your unhappy friend,
JOSEPHINE CHARLTON.

LETTER XXVIII.

SIR ALFRED VILLIERS TO THE HON. CHARLES
MELVILLE.

Henley-upon-Thames.

Vanity of vanities ! all under the sun is vanity ! Thus said the wisest of men, after having tried every novelty that ingenuity could invent, and pursued every pleasure that imagination could conceive.

“ I made me,” says he, “ great works ; I builded me houses : I planted me vineyards : I made me gardens and orchards : I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits : I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood

that bringeth forth trees : I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces, I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts, and whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy. But behold ! all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

And such is the grave conclusion which at three and twenty your friend has come to, and wearied and disgusted with the world, he has resolved to be a bachelor, and to spend the remainder of his days in study, although Solomon says of this also " that it is a weariness of the flesh."

Not many months ago I wrote and told you I had found the object of my search—a woman to whom I could with transport have given the name of Villiers, and whom I lived in hopes of one day calling mine.

But, Charles, I was deceived—she is *not* what I fondly imagined her to be—she is like the rest of her sex—a false and fickle thing, and I have done with her. I called myself her friend—her brother, because I did not dare to speak so soon of love, but she *must* have seen that there was more than a brother's tenderness in all I said and did. She affected an innocence and a sincerity which charmed me—but alas ! it was only the affectation, for I have discovered that she is capable of imprudence, duplicity, and falsehood. These are heavy charges I allow, but nevertheless they are the result of my own observations, and not of report. I never before met with

a girl whom I admired sufficiently to entertain a desire of making my wife, and as *she* has proved faithless, I am inclined to conclude with Nekayah, "that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged entangle themselves with indissoluble compacts."

I am not quite sure that I shall not travel again for a short time. There is implanted in the human mind a thirst after knowledge—knowledge of every kind. It was the desire of this which induced our first great parent to yield to the tempter when he so artfully and enticingly described the effects produced by eating the fruit of that forbidden tree. How did he work on her mind?—By inspiring her with a wish to become *wise*.

Milton thus fancifully imagines his address.

" Sated at length, ere long I might perceive
 Strange alteration in me, to degree
 Of reason in my inward powers—and speech
 Wanted not long, though to this shape retained.
 Thenceforth to speculations high or deep,
 I turned my thoughts, and with capacious mind
 Considered all things visible in heaven,
 Or earth, or middle, all things fair and good."

In *her* state the desire to penetrate into hidden things was sinful, because she had received a command from her maker to be satisfied with the revelations he had made. But to us it is permitted to dive into the secret recesses of the earth, to fathom the lowest depths of the sea, to climb the most tremendous precipices, and to contemplate

" The spacious firmament on high
 With all its blue ethereal sky."

So if my next letter is dated from the South Pole, be not greatly amazed. I shall now conclude, hoping you will be much entertained with my letter of quotations, for it is literally nothing else.

Ever your's, most faithfully,

ALFRED VILLIERS.

LETTER XXIX.

MRS. PONSONBY TO MERELINA.

Clifton.

MY DEAR GIRL,

You must not suffer yourself to be too much affected by the every day occurrences of life, or you may become the victim of a morbid melancholy. I have been favored with a view of your last letter to Agnes who has returned from the Isle of Wight, and is now happily settled at ——, and observe with the most tender concern your remarks about your father's unkindness to you, and his prepossession in favor of the ambitious Miss Charlton. But never fear, if you continue to pursue your duty you cannot fail of meeting one day with a reward, and we will hope that when Lord St. Clair shall seriously reflect upon the nature of your offence, and remember the miseries which an unhappy

marriage entailed upon himself, he will allow that you are right in refusing the object of his wishes, and relent, and let us likewise hope that the unamiable girl, who I regret to say is your associate, is yet not of such vitiated morals as to wish seriously to injure you in the opinion of his lordship.

I, my child, am a woman inured to vicissitudes, and during my life I have seen many changes. I have seen the guilty prosper for a season, and the virtuous subjected to many trials, but yet a little while, and the vengeance of the Most High has overtaken the degraded triumphed, and the sorrow stricken children of virtue have been re-established in their comforts, and improved by their afflictions.

“The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,
No traveller ever reached that blest abode
Who found not thorns and briers in his road.”

Bear up, then, against your trials; let your example be such as to induce others to follow a religion which yields in you such fruits: seek for comfort in times of distress, and direction in times of doubt, from the pages of inspiration, and remember that it is only by “enduring unto the end,” with faith and patience, that your graces can be matured, or your soul saved. God has a twofold motive in trying his children—the first is to *improve* their character, and the second is to make them acquainted with themselves. He who created man at first, and who gave him a soul capable of loving and serving him, could without doubt have so ordered his destiny as to secure

him from trial, and had he continued as he was formed, a pure and spotless creature, earth would have been his eternal dwelling place, and the Creator would have had no other design than to render it a happy one. But by transgression man changed his nature, and converted the blooming and prolific earth into a sterile wilderness ; a bitter curse was imprecated on all that had been pronounced good, and the last wonder of the creation doomed to return to the dust from whence he had sprung. O if it were not irreverent to ascribe mortal feelings to Deity, could you not fancy the Father of the Universe, when he had uttered the last great "*Fiat*," surveying with satisfaction the work of his hands, and then to complete the mighty toy, breathing breath into the beauteous statue which lay motionless, extended on beds of perfumed flowers, and as it discovered symptoms of life and sense, beholding it with rapture, and thus addressing it—"Thou image of myself, and master-piece of my skill, I endow thee with reason superior to every other living thing on the glorious orb which I have created out of nothing, and I make thee lord over the fowl and the brute. Go, dwell in that 'inclosure green,' that 'woody theatre of stateliest view,' and live with that fair partner whom I have formed to bless thee, and to share with thee the delights which nature, clothed in eternal verdure, and ever bearing choicest fruits to gratify thy taste, can yield—be happy. Thou sayest thou lovest me, but how to prove that love? Stay! I have thought, and yet I will know how deep thy gratitude. In yonder blissful seat there is all

that can please thine eye, or charm thy sense. All are thine—thou mayest partake of all, save of that tree which rears its head above the rest, as if in proud disdain. Of *that* thou mayest not eat—and, that thou mayest be sure I cannot be deceived, the moment that thou darest to disobey my one command, thou shalt experience different sensations to all that thou hast done before, and as a punishment thou shalt turn to corruption, and what I formed to live for ever, shall at my word fall back to dust, and this shall be entitled—‘death.’” With this he sent him forth, and for a time man lived in bliss beyond what mortals can conceive, but yet a while and that fair fragile thing, called woman, yielded to the voice of some unknown enemy, and plucked the fruit from the golden but forbidden tree. The food surpassed in sweetness all that she had ever before tasted, and temptingly, and with artful grace, she sought to involve her spouse in ruin, by prevailing upon him to eat likewise. Majestically proud and firmly resolute he first refused, and then reproved, but ah ! the love of *her* overcame every better feeling, and ere another sun had sunk to rest, he was the same himself—a fallen creature.

Behold what agitation reigned in heaven ! The mighty God “descended straight” to Eden’s once blissful bowers, and with a mighty voice, roared out the dreadful sentence—“Man is fallen, and death henceforth shall have dominion o’er him.” A withering blast destroyed the fruitful trees, and ere they should again yield fruit, it was decreed that man should toil, and exercise his

wasted strength in labour of a harder kind than he had known before. Earth groaned, and e'en the Almighty almost wept to think that what he loved so well had fallen with *power* to stand. “Will no one save?” cried he; “Yes,” answered the Son of the most High God, “we will not so be foiled; we will not thus destroy what we have made; let us increase our glory and raise this weak and erring novelty higher than even Paradise. I will die for man—for guilty man; I will resign all my glory, I will descend to yonder ruined world, and there, by a life of suffering and a death of agony, I will bear on my own body the full measure of thy wrath. I will be a Saviour to all them that will believe, and those that trust in me shall find pardon and acceptance, and though ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ must be passed, yet when that is o'er, they shall be received into the ‘city of habitation to go no more out for ever.’ By this we shall frustrate the malice of our great adversary.”

The Father listened with astonishment and approved. “ ‘Tis done,” said he, “and man shall again be placed on even ground with his deadly foe, and once more shall he have power to stand or fall.

‘Be thou in Adam’s room
The head of all mankind though Adam’s son.
As in him perish all men, so in thee,
As from a second root, shall be restor’d
As many as are restor’d *without thee none.*’”

And now, my Merelina, seeing the position in which we stand, think you not that we have an “all sufficient advocate.” Did our blessed Redeemer pass thirty years

in this world of woe, experiencing every trial which can afflict our nature, without being able to sympathize with us. No, no, "he was in all points tempted like as we are;" he comprehends the contests we endure in endeavouring to withstand temptation, and he sends them that we may learn different lessons from them, and be prepared to enter that world which is to be our future home. This is not our "resting place." Three-score years and ten are the utmost limits of our pilgrimage, and how few, how *very* few attain to half that age ! Is it not then more than folly, is it not madness, to spend our time as if time were never to be destroyed. But it is unnecessary to use any arguments to convince you of the futility of sublunary things : you have already enlisted in the holy cause, and have determined "to fight the good fight of faith;" only you suffer yourself to be too much cast down at the troubles which assail you. O "be not faithless, but believing :" endure with patience ; "run the race with cheerfulness," and a glorious prize awaits you.

Far, far be it from me to persuade you to disregard your earthly parent, for a child is bound by every law of nature, and by the express command of God, to "honour its father and mother," and as if to increase the obligation, it is the first commandment which has a promise annexed to it, but yet it is the second part of the law, and duty to our Creator stands pre-eminent.

You must not consent to an union with Dom Manuel. I would have you persist in this, but still show in every action of your life that it is your earnest desire to gratify

Lord St. Clair when it can be done consistently. He is your best earthly friend, and you must try and prove a blessing to him. Who knows but he may yet be brought to confess himself a sinner, and to plead forgiveness at the throne of grace. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much," and until the spark of life is extinct, hope may yet animate us to strive for the conversion "of a sinner from the error of his ways."

With respect to the little adventure you related to Agnes, will you forgive my freedom if I advise you by all means to mention it immediately to your papa. You know, my love, the world is uncharitable, and there are some persons ill-natured enough to feel pleasure in discovering others guilty of weakness and indiscretions. You are young and inexperienced, and such a circumstance as meeting a stranger unknown to your friends, let your motive be ever so good, will be turned to your disadvantage. "The concentrated gaze of many an eye is upon you," and *some* there are wicked enough to exult in your downfall. You have indulged your benevolent feelings, and your love of the romantic, without regard to prudence, and although the history of this stranger may naturally awaken your curiosity, I think you had acted more wisely had you informed him that you could have no secrets from your father. I know you to be incapable of anything that is wrong, and am sure you were prompted only by a wish to relieve a distressed and unfortunate youth, but then those who know you not so well, may judge you less kindly, and it is well even to avoid "the appearance of evil." I

know you will forgive me for speaking thus plainly, but I watch over your interests with almost maternal anxiety, and every action of your life is of importance as an indication of your future character. You must let your "light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven." The end of your education has been to prepare you for eternity, and to enable you to discharge with propriety the active duties of life. All human beings need a guide to direct them, but particularly the young, and still more especially young women. "Caressed and flattered," as an elegant female writer observes, "they are watched with jealousy and suspicion, thrown off their guard by the most tender indulgence, and the slightest shadow of imprudence renders them liable to misconstruction and reproach."

Praying that you may be carried safely through the storms that are lowering o'er you,

I remain, my sweet girl,

Your very sincere friend,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XXX.

MISS CHARLTON TO THE BARONESS DE ROSNY.

Portland Place.

O fortune! thou hast not dealt kindly with me, but I defy thee to break my spirit. Thou hast thwarted me in my wishes, but I have made another suffer with me, and therefore I care not. Worse cannot befall me—but to *think* will drive me to distraction, so now let me tell you all that has occurred since last I wrote. Not many days after Miss St. Clair's strange conduct already related, we went to a musical party at Lord Selby's. Soon after our arrival Sir Henry Beaumont came to me and said—

“Have you heard the news, Miss Charlton?”

“What news?” said I.

“That Sir Alfred Villiers is going abroad.”

“Impossible! why I thought he had been all round the world half a dozen times. What motive can he have in travelling?”

“He assigns none.”

“Will he be here this evening?”

“I scarcely know, but he is expected.”

“Hem!” said Colonel Dalglish, who was seated on the other side of me, “it will be a sad disappointment to some who hoped to make an impression upon him.”

"Really, Colonel," I replied, "you seem to think him a paragon. For my part I consider it quite a bore to be in his company long, his conversation is so tedious."

"A *bore!* do you know, Miss Charlton, how Lady Blessington defines a *bore*? 'As one who talks to us about *others*, when we wish to hear only of *ourselves*,' and I believe she is right, for a lady is seldom satisfied unless she is herself the subject."

"Surely," answered Sir Henry, "it is an insult to the fair sex to deny them this little gratification, for they ought to occupy all our thoughts. When I am in the society of such an angelic creature as the lady before me, should I not, Sir, be *absolutely insensible* to commence a dissertation upon some new work, or some abstract study?"

"I should rather be inclined myself to consider you *absolutely sensible*," said the Colonel.

"It is very well for a man to talk so at your time of life, but——"

"But," interrupted I, "were *you* to talk so, Sir Henry, I would for ever banish you from my presence, as unworthy of my favor."

"I could not survive so cruel a decree," said he.

"Then I will try you, for positively I should like to see you expire on my account."

"Nay, cruel girl, is it thus you requite my devotion? There is no boon you could ask which I would not grant, no wish you could express which I would not instantly gratify."

"You had better demand exemption from worldly care, then, Miss Charlton," said the Colonel.

"If you crave," said Sir Henry, "an immortal gift from a mortal, you must suffer disappointment."

"Yet nothing less," said the Colonel, "ought to satisfy an immortal creature."

"For heaven's sake," I exclaimed, "don't introduce such subjects. I shall no doubt receive a lecture from our right reverend father, Sir Alfred Villiers, when he appears, and *two* in one evening would be insupportable." At this moment the very individual entered the room, and hearing his own name I suppose, he made me a most grotesque bow, saying, "Most highly honored in being the theme of a lady's discourse. Shall my conceit induce me to believe you were bestowing applause *nemine contradicente*, or was it a *pro* and *con*?"

"Neither," said I, blushing, "I was preparing to receive a sermon from you for the many misdemeanours of which I have been guilty since last I saw you."

"I am exceedingly sorry," said he, smiling, "that I forgot my sacerdotal robe, but it were sacrilege to preach without it. For what dost thou wish absolution?"

"Unjustly condemning the innocent," cried Sir Henry. "And turning a deaf ear to the counsels of a sage adviser," muttered the Colonel.

"O daughter!" said Sir Alfred, "these are heavy charges; ere I could grant thee absolution I must meditate much. Thou must do severe penance."

"I pray you," said I, "let it be nothing more severe than to listen to one of your sermons, which I shall not

mind to night, for do you know it is among the ‘*on dits*’ that you are going to leave England, and really you have so reformed me already that I am scarcely known by my acquaintance. A few more very impressive lessons would effect a total transformation.”

“I do not mind being the subject of your ridicule,” said he, “but do you keep spies around me, Miss Charlton? You appear to know my intentions almost as soon as they are formed.”

“I only *just* heard the news,” said I, “but is it really true? To what part are you destined?”

“I have not yet determined. Shall I keep a courier to convey the intelligence when my route is decided upon?”

“No,” said I, half ashamed at my inquisitiveness, “my curiosity is not so insatiable, and unless your courier were an ‘Atalanta,’ it would be difficult to overtake me, for I mean myself to be a bird of passage for some time. If I remain at Henley much longer, I shall be considered a fixture.”

“You surely do not think of leaving us yet,” said Sir Henry, affecting a tone of sorrow.

“I hope very shortly to be in that centre of fashion, wealth, and beauty—the metropolis,” answered I.

“And the voice of mirth and gladness will no longer be heard in our dwellings, when *you*, the fair promoter of our joys, shall have fled,” said Sir Henry, mournfully.

“By St. George,” said the Colonel, “I feel quite ill.”

“Will you like my smelling bottle, Colonel Dalglish? you will find it very reviving,” said I, and I presented it.

"Can *I* fetch you any thing," said Sir Henry, "are you subject to such sudden indisposition?"

"If I have but changed the subject," exclaimed the Colonel, abruptly, "I am satisfied."

"Well, really, *I* don't half like such sentimentality, Sir Henry, myself; I wish you would talk more rationally."

"You *cannot* satisfy a lady," said the Colonel; "it were easier to satisfy death. Here is one person condemned for talking nonsense, and another who talks sense meets with the same fate."

"I should prefer them amalgamated, Colonel," said I, "*ne quid nimis* and *vice versa*, but how very horrible of you to make such a comparison; you quite frighten me."

"Yet," said Sir Alfred, "it is a subject we must all contemplate some day, for 'it is appointed unto all men once to die.'"

"And none of us know how soon," answered the Colonel.

"This is the text, then, I suppose," said I, "shall I fetch Miss St. Clair to listen to the farewell address of Sir Alfred Villiers."

"I assure you," said he, "I am not going to place you in such purgatory, and if I *were*, Miss St. Clair seems better engaged."

I glanced towards her, and observed that she was conversing with unusual gaiety to the young Count de Nevers, but it appeared to me assumed, to conceal stronger feelings.

"I never saw her in such excellent spirits," said I;

"I am greatly pleased, and if I can prevail on her to accompany me to Portland Place, I am in hopes we shall quite metamorphose her."

"From a thoughtful, discreet young lady, into a thoughtless, foolish one," answered the Colonel.

"What a compliment! but why do you think her so much more sensible than other people?" asked I.

"Because I never heard her utter any thing *non-sensical*, Miss Charlton. Moreover she looks the picture of goodness, and *Vultus est index animi*."

"Not always," said Sir Alfred.

"Hem! I have generally found it the case, but I may be deceived in the present instance."

"Nay, pardon me, I am not considering *this* case, for present company is always excepted, and I only meant by my observation that we cannot judge of character by expression of countenance."

"I wish, Colonel," said I, "you would not interrupt Sir Alfred. He was just going to tell me something about contemplating death, and if Sir Henry dies for my sake, as he not long ago declared he would, there will be a subject for me immediately. Only I pray," said I, turning to him, "look as pleasing as you can; assume a smile, or I shall weary of beholding you."

"Mirth on merry subjects, and gravity on serious ones, Miss Charlton, I should prefer," said Sir Alfred. "It ill becomes us to trifle on such an one as this."

"I knew I should offend you," said I, "but the temptation to say so was irresistible. I have not yet learned self-restraint, you see."

" Self-restraint, or self-government, is one of the most difficult virtues to exercise, if I may be permitted to call it a *virtue*, and requires all the powers of a well regulated mind. To restrain the excursive flights of thought, to detect the errors in our own conduct, and to meditate o'er our words ere we give them utterance, is not the work of a day. In perusing the biography of the most eminent Christians, we shall find they were most strict in their self-requisitions. If we attentively observe ourselves, we shall discover that we all have an inclination towards some particular fault or weakness, and to endeavour to correct this should be our peculiar aim."

" I suppose *mine* is a proneness to talk at random," said I, " but when I was a child, my governesses were all so strict with me, they never suffered me to speak unless I was spoken to, and now it is so delightful to say just what comes into my mind without reflection, that I do not think I could induce myself to be cautious."

" It would by degrees form itself into a habit like all other things that are pursued for some time," said he, " and we soon incline to like what we accustom ourselves to do."

" What a pity you are going away, Sir Alfred," said I, affecting an air of indifference. " How many persons have you converted since you came to Henley ?"

At this moment Lady Selby commenced a beautiful air on the harp, and our conversation ceased.

In the course of the evening Sir Alfred addressed Miss St. Clair. She answered him rather coolly, but

expressed regret at not having been at home when Lady Claudine and he called.

"It is of no consequence," said he, "Miss Charlton said you were alone, and Claudine thought a little walk might have been agreeable."

"It would have been particularly so," said she, "but I had an engagement at home."

"And yet you were *not* at home," said I, "when we called, which greatly surprised me, as you had refused to walk with me."

"I was only about the grounds, Josephine," replied Miss St. Clair, and colored deeply.

Sir Alfred looked at her. "I am always unfortunate enough to intrude upon Miss St. Clair when my company is not wanted," and, without waiting for a reply, he walked away.

As we were driving home I asked Merelina if she had heard that Sir Alfred was going to leave Henley.

She said she had not, and appeared greatly surprised when I told her. Lord St. Clair said he understood he was going early in the ensuing month. From that evening we saw nothing more of him until a few days before his departure, when he called to take leave. Two young ladies, the daughters of a General Rivers, were visiting at Henley: one had accompanied Miss St. Clair to make a few purchases at the milliner's, and the other was at home with me. We were in the breakfast parlour at work when Sir Alfred entered. He said he did not like to leave the country without bidding adieu to his friends, as it was probable he might never live to return.

Lord St. Clair, who followed him into the room, told him that he must not entertain such gloomy notions, and asked him how long he thought of staying abroad?

"It is uncertain," said he, "I am now going to Arabia, and though I am not infected with the superstition of Byron, who on departing for Greece felt an inward conviction that he should never more revisit his mother country, still I feel what every other person does in exposing his life to the merciless power of the waves. The same God is there to protect me, I am aware, and the term of each man's life is decreed as soon as he enters on a state of being, but you know it is natural to feel more safe by our own fire-side, than when we are roaming in foreign lands, and exposed to the peculiar diseases which infest tropical climes."

"I should have thought," said I, "you might have contented yourself at home, after having spent two years in travelling."

"There is yet a wide field for me to explore, Miss Charlton," said he, "for my knowledge of foreign customs and productions is very limited at present. The greater part of those two years were passed in America, and I believe I am tolerably familiar with the history of that country, but of others my ideas have been formed only from the perusal of the best works. Your lordship (addressing Lord St. Clair) spent some time in Arabia, I believe."

"I spent a summer there, and the heat is intense during that season, owing to the very small quantity of rain which falls."

"But it is only in the Tehâma or Low-lands that you suffer so excessively from heat, I believe, for I have understood that as soon as you get into the interior of the country where the land is elevated, the air is fresh and cool."

"Exactly so, because the high land has its regular rainy season, beginning about the middle of June, and continuing till the end of September, whereas in the low lands several years will sometimes elapse without the parched plains receiving other irrigation than from the dews, which however are copious."

"The *sazum* is not much felt in the southern parts of Arabia, is it?"

"Happily not; these poisonous blasts are felt principally in the tract between Bagdad and Mecca."

"Their noxious effects arise from passing over the sandy deserts, I suppose."

"It is believed so. At Jeddâ the wind is in such a state of dryness as to parch the skin, and a piece of paper will crack as it would if you were to put it in an oven."

"Only the *north* wind has this effect," answered Sir Alfred, "for it has struck me as remarkable that when the air blows from the *south*, a clammy wetness is imparted to every thing you touch, and the atmosphere, instead of being loaded with sand, becomes foggy."

"Dear!" said I, "what can induce you to visit such a place, Sir Alfred?"

"Parts of Arabia and Turkey in Asia have been the scene of so many interesting events, Miss Charlton, that I feel immense curiosity to visit them."

"The history of Arabia previously to Mohammed is very imperfect," observed Lord St. Clair, "nothing more than a list of kings, interspersed with a few unsatisfactory remarks. Before his time they lived as they do in the present day, partly in cities, and partly in moveable encampments, as wandering tribes, and the accomplishments of an Arab were hospitality, good horsemanship, and expertness in the use of arms."

"Did your lordship find the language difficult to acquire?"

"Not particularly, the pronunciation varies considerably in different parts, but the classical language of the Koran is the standard of correctness for all Arabic writers."

"I should much like to see a copy of the Koran," said I.

"There is one in my library, Miss Charlton," observed Lord St. Clair, "and though it contains many absurdities, some sublime ideas may be gathered from it. On the cover is generally the inscription, 'Let none touch but those who are clean,' which is intended to prevent the profanation of it. The Mohammedans believe it was brought from heaven by the angel Gabriel."

"Most astonishing infatuation!" said Sir Alfred, "that so many should have become converts to such a faith. The number of Mohammedans on the globe is estimated at one hundred and forty millions."

"Pray what are the leading articles of their creed?" asked I.

“They say that God is one, and that Mohammed is his prophet, the last and most excellent he deigned to send on earth. They likewise think that in heaven we shall enjoy every sensual delight,” said Sir Alfred.

“I visited his tomb at Medina,” remarked Lord St. Clair; “it is enclosed within an iron grating, so that no person can approach it, and a guard of forty eunuchs is kept to watch it, for they pretend that many treasures are there deposited.”

“It is only in the pure religion of Jesus Christ,” said Sir Alfred, “that the leader was ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,’ or that humility is enforced as the grand requisite. Contrast the pomp and splendour of Mohammedanism or Catholicism, with the simplicity of the gospel. Other systems need something *external* to render them attractive, while this, on the contrary, offers only poverty, suffering, and ill-will to its votaries: it speaks of no exemption from worldly sorrow, but plainly asserts that ‘Man is born to trouble;’ it requires no corporeal inflictions, no penance, no self-immolation, but promises pardon, peace, and eternal blessedness to those who will accept them, as free gifts from a crucified, but now risen and exalted Saviour.”

“That,” said Lord St. Clair, “is my stumbling stone. If pardon is free, good works are unnecessary.”

“No,” said Sir Alfred, “thousands split upon that rock and are undone. ‘Thou sayest thou believest,’ then shew me thy *faith* by thy *works*, for the ‘devils also believe and tremble.’ ”

“What can you make of *these words*,” asked his

lordship, “‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’ We cannot read this passage, and still urge man’s free-will.”

“ I allow that free-will and free-grace appear contradictory to the unenlightened mind, but they are reconcileable. Salvation is freely offered to *all*, ‘without money and without price ;’ and all are free to accept it if they will pray that they may be enabled to do so. As the tenth article in our religion declares ‘since the fall of Adam, man cannot turn himself by his own natural strength,’ but still he *can ask* for that grace which he feels to need, and ‘every one that asketh receiveth.’ ”

“ Well,” said Lord St. Clair, “ I cannot reconcile doctrines so opposite. I am myself a ‘free-thinker,’ and *morality* is all I deem necessary.”

“ You are wrong,” said Sir Alfred, “ the mere moralist in the sight of God is no better than the *open profaner* of his law. The *one* pursues his mad career, reckless of every thing ; the *other* is desirous of preserving his character unblemished in the sight of his fellow-creatures, but neither remember that it is the *heart* which *God* considereth.”

“ What should you say, Sir Alfred,” said I, “ if on your return to England you should hear that I have become very good, and spend my time like Thomas à Becket in dressing the wounds and washing the feet of thirteen beggars daily.”

“ I should, for your own sake, rejoice, Miss Charlton, to hear you had become *very good*, as you call it, but

really I should not expect to hear such a proof of it. Do you think," said he, "Miss St. Clair will be long before she is at home?"

"I should suppose four or five hours," replied his lordship, "for when a lady once enters a milliner's shop, you never know when she will be visible again. But I wish Merelina had known you were coming this morning, and I have no doubt she would have contrived to defer this business, which is not of much importance, I dare say."

"It would have afforded me pleasure to see your daughter once again, I must confess," and he introduced a fresh subject of conversation, but after staying full two hours, he rose and said he believed he *must* be going. He took my hand, "God bless you, Miss Charlton, may you enjoy health and happiness." Then turning to Lord St. Clair, "will you present my respectful remembrances to Miss St. Clair, and beg her to accept my best wishes." "I will," answered his lordship, "and I am sure Merelina unites with me in wishing you a prosperous voyage."

I thought he seemed affected, but politely bowing to Miss Rivers, he departed, yet did he linger as long as possible around the house. What *I* experienced, Almira, words cannot tell, but no matter. I can bear to be disappointed, if no other supplies my place in his affections; *this* would be insupportable. You will readily conceive that I hastened to quit a place which had proved so fatal in destroying my happiness. I could not persuade the sanctified daughter of Lord St. Clair to accompany me, nor did I particularly wish it, for she

might again prove a rival. In point of personal beauty she equals myself, and not until I beheld *her*, did I ever meet with one who did, yet she is quite a different style of girl from myself; and what is most astonishing, she does not think herself at all handsome, at least she makes believe so. I do not fancy she ever liked me much, but that Mrs. Ponsonby prejudiced her against me I am confident. I am now indifferent to all, and every one.

IN CONTINUATION.

As I have nothing to employ me, I think I cannot do better than take my seat at my desk again, for my arrival in town is not yet circulated, or I dare say I should have had half a hundred calls of congratulation before this. Nay, now do not be affronted at this sort of negative compliment, for I do not mean that I should not then have felt equal pleasure in writing to you, but only that I should have had no time, for you know every one pays me homage here, because my equal can scarcely be found in beauty and wealth combined. O lack a day! I wish I had never seen Henley villa; but do you know I have half a mind to enter a convent. Don't you think I should make a good nun, or shall I follow your example, and marry some rich old figure of fun, with whom I can do as I like. By the by, how is the Baron, my dear? I suppose he is pretty well confined to his room with the gout. I wonder how you can manage to amuse him. I think I should give him a quieting draught, that would send him to sleep for a

few days, but one thing you *can* go out when you like, that is to say, if he has overcome his jealous fit, for I remember when you first married he never would suffer you to move from his side, but then to be sure you had no fortune, and so you were glad to put up with anything for the sake of his money, but with me the case is far otherwise.

I think town, or all the people in it, have grown very stupid since I left it. They tell me Lady Fanshawe has become quite religious. Would you have believed it, but really it is quite the fashion, and according to the modern acceptation of the term, I should not mind much becoming so myself, for it only consists in looking sanctified, and putting your name down as a subscriber to all public charities, and visiting the clergy, and attending prayer meetings. But to be a Christian indeed, a Christian such as Mrs. Ponsonby, and Miss St. Clair, and Sir Alfred Villiers, would require a greater effort than I feel inclined to make for a few years to come. And yet I assure you I am not quite a heathen, and when I am tired of the world, I shall be as good as any one else, but only think what any one would say if I were all at once to become a saint. Why they would quite laugh, and to be made the ridicule of all my acquaintances would not be vastly pleasant, besides I assure you I have no disposition to give up the gaieties of the world until I grow old.

I fancy this will be quite a gay season amongst our circle, at least so my sisters say, and I am really dying to see some of my old associates. Poor young Belfield!

I wonder where he is now. He was rather disappointed at my rejection of him, but I wonder how such a *yea nay* could have presumed to make proposals to me. I should think his mother told him what to say, for he does not look as if he ever had an original thought. I suppose he heard what my fortune was, and so he thought it would be very comfortable to make me Mrs. Belfield, but la, my dear, I could not have endured such a creature. Did you ever see him? He is about five feet seven inches in height, and his figure is like two deal boards plastered together, with sandy hair and whiskers, and O such eyes! a mixture of grey and green. Then his manners, but *ma foi!* they are past description. He never looks at you when he speaks to you, and he blushes like a girl, and he stammers worse than ever Demosthenes did, I am convinced, and he very seldom ventures to address you, for fear I suppose that you should fancy he is in love with you, which fear is quite unnecessary, for very few would ever consent to take *him* "for better and for worse." Perhaps some forlorn maiden on the verge of *thirty* might take compassion upon him; but I am sure no one else would ever dream of such a thing. They say he is very clever, and that he has studied a great deal, can repeat all the Latin classics, and solve the most difficult problem in mathematics, but I could dispense with a little of his learning myself, and think it would have been better had he read Chesterfield's "Letters on Politeness" a few times, for he is perfectly *gauche*. I wish I could remember the words he used, but I know I was so amused that I

absolutely laughed. It was very shocking of me I confess, but I could not resist, for he was decidedly more embarrassed than *I* was, and I really think confusion ought only to be manifested by our sex. But there is a carriage just stopped at the door. I wonder whose it is. I must go, so very abruptly conclude with best love, and remain,

Your's truly,

JOSEPHINE CHARLTON.

LETTER XXXI.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Henley-upon-Thames.

I promised, my ever dear girl, to write to you within a few days after the date of my last, but I have been prevented by various combined causes. Our villa is now cleared of all its visitors, and I am *quite* alone—even papa is away. Parliamentary business requires his presence in London for a short time, and he much wished on this account to take a house there for the season, but I objected, as I feel, Agnes, that my strength is fast declining, and that I could not bear the excitement of a town life in my present debilitated state. Besides, papa would choose a residence as near as

possible to Miss Charlton, and to be relieved from her society is my principal comfort. I do not wish to speak unkindly of her, but she has injured me irremediably. I confess I did not think I was so *very* disagreeable and gloomy as she has represented me to Lord St. Clair. Your dear mamma was wont to *curb* my spirits, and the epithet usually attached to me at Woodstock was that of "The giddy little girl!" Papa, too, always used to call me his merry darling; but his continued unkindness has damped the natural ardour of my disposition, and Miss Charlton has thought proper to insinuate that it is *religion* which makes me melancholy, in consequence of which his aversion to it has increased ten-fold, and I am subject to his ridicule, contempt, and almost dislike. It was my earnest wish to have convinced him what power religion possesses to render us *happy*, and by always appearing cheerful in his presence, I was more effectually doing so, than by entering into any arguments upon the subject, but every endeavour is now frustrated. He curses the day on which he ever beheld my mother, and wishes he had left me with her, and never interested himself about me. In vain do I assure him of my obedience and my love; his mind has been prejudiced against me, and his affections alienated. O Josephine! a day will surely come when thou wilt think with regret o'er the past. Ah! when sickness overtakes thee, and thou art stretched on the bed of languishing, what will thy wealth, thy beauty, or the admiration thou hast excited, avail thee then! Thou art pursuing the gratification of thine own desires, and the vanities

of life with the eagerness of a maniac, but all is an empty shadow—a visionary dream—a fatal delusion. Tell me, hast thou never wished for something more substantial; hast thou never sighed to taste those joys which are mine: notwithstanding all thy malice, I have pleasures which thou knowest not of, and a peace of mind which thou canst neither comprehend nor destroy.

I am happy, though distressed, and my spirit, disengaged from worldly cares, longs “to mount up on wings as eagles,” and to be transported to those thrice happy realms of uncreated bliss where my blessed mother dwells. Could *she* have foretold all my sorrow, how would her heart have ached, and her tears have flowed, but you will be impatient to hear the continuation of the history of the young stranger, and I will gratify you. On the appointed day I was in the garden at the hour fixed. I felt I knew not how, and the youth was scarcely less agitated than myself.

“I have consented,” said I, “yet once again to meet you, because I am desirous of asking a few questions relative to the brooch you fancy once belonged to you.”

“Ah! madam,” said he, “it is not fancy, but mine is a long history, and would not perhaps interest you.”

“I should like to hear your name, and afterwards your history,” said I.

“My name matters not, fair lady: suffice it to say that I am descended from a high and noble family, and could my ancestors behold me, and see what shame I have brought on their once illustrious house, they would disown me. I was the only son of my parents, and

in mistaken fondness they gratified my every desire. Pampered and humoured, I knew not contradiction or control. To my father's domestics I was haughty and overbearing, foolishly fancying they were made to be my slaves, and accustomed to be indulged in whatever I desired, my ideas soon wandered from *real* to *imaginary* wants; my temper became peevish; my disposition fretful; and as an inevitable consequence, my health bad. The most exquisite delicacies were procured to tempt my sickly appetite, but I turned from them with disgust, and all the remedies applied to relieve me only contributed to augment my malady.

"Had I been sent to school and well disciplined under a strict master, I might have overcome my evil propensities, and been now an honourable and useful member of society, but my parents did not like to part with their darling whom they loved to *excess*, and whom they were ruining by false indulgence, so they engaged a man of amiable disposition, and acknowledged talent, as a tutor for me. I felt sure I should dislike him, and had resolved not to submit myself to his direction, so on the first morning after his arrival, when I was summoned to the study, I said I wanted to play and would not go. Sweetmeats, playthings, and bribes were alike offered me in vain, and I screamed so violently that my mother, taking me in her arms, imprinted a thousand kisses on my cheek, declared they would make me ill if they compelled me to study, and said I should do as I liked. Satisfied with the victory I had gained, and conscious that I could at any time conquer by my tears, I bid de-

fiance to every one, and for several days pursued the same conduct. Mr. Heathcot (for that was the name of the gentleman who had been engaged to take charge of my education) remonstrated on the impropriety of allowing a child of ten years old to have his own way, and entreated permission to exercise his authority, but my parents could not bear me to be reproved and hoped, as I grew older, I should grow wiser. Alas ! it was a delusive hope. Rarely do we find that those seeds which are sown on the light productive soil of infancy are ever totally eradicated, whether they be flowers of virtue or weeds of vice. Is it ever expected that a steed who has not been subjected to the bridle, or felt the spur, should become a passive and quiet animal when old, or that a tiger who has never been tamed when young, should submit to be under the dominion of man in its old age. Yet is it expected that children who are indulged in all their little hearts pant after, who are encouraged in indolence and obstinacy, and whose passions are not restrained, should be prepared to contend with the world. Yet is it expected that *they* who have been unaccustomed to repress a wish, however chimerical, or to conceal a thought, however wild, should all at once be enabled to exercise self-government, and to engage in the busy concerns of the world, where strict principle, deep reflection, and unwearied diligence are required.

“ But to proceed with my narration. Mr. Heathcot finding I could not be prevailed upon to sit at my lessons, even for an hour, frequently invited me to take a walk with him, and by calling my attention to the

book of nature, tried to awaken a desire after knowledge. He would stop and pick the wild flowers that grew in such profusion in our neighbourhood, and point out to me their various beauties, and the uses to which they were applied. ‘There is nothing,’ he would say, ‘which an Omnipotent Being has created, *too* mean or too despicable to engage the attention of the most refined minds. Not the smallest plant that lies concealed, or heedlessly disregarded by man, but is the object of *his* care, and receives nourishment from the earth at *his* command. Order and symmetry are discoverable in the minutest objects, and yet there is such a never-ending variety of form, and diversity of color, that the eye is never wearied. Observe how every leaf is shaded, and what richness of tints, what harmony, what fragrance, pervades each flower, and behold the fruits as they hang in tempting clusters on the pendent branches, and remember that but a few months ago those very trees were bared and sapless, and manifested no symptoms of life. This mighty sphere moved on, and soon the genial rays of that resplendent luminary, the sun, shone bright and full on the chilled orb—the gentle rains descended—nature reared her drooping head once more—the frozen sap relaxed, and gradually diffused itself through every vein—the leaves shot forth and spread in rich luxuriance o'er every branch; then the blossom appeared, and soon assuming another form, became the fruit which is so delicious and grateful to your palate. Partake, my child, of nature’s bounty, and in silent adoration thank the God of Nature for his gifts. Enjoy what he has

sent you, but remember to acknowledge *the giver*, and as he "sends rain on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust," and as he dispenses his favors equally on those who madly "scorn his counsel, and will none of his reproof;" and on those who humbly serve and love him, so do you from this learn a lesson of forbearance and forgiveness.' At other times he would direct my attention to the scaly inhabitants of the mighty seas, and leading me to the banks of the river, which wound its rapid course through our village, he would lead me to reflect upon the goodness of God, in causing those fish most fit for the use of man to swarm upon our shores, whilst those which are less valuable for the common purposes of life, are permitted to sport in the deep waters of the ocean, removed from *all*, save those rash mariners, who dare to skim o'er the surface of the waters, in those master-pieces of man's ingenuity—ships. 'Yet,' would he say, 'must you remember that the lofty "lord of the creation" was indebted to the little nautilus for the idea of navigation.' Then he would show me that, although fishes are possessed of so few exterior organs, they are enabled to make such use of their tails and fins, as to render them infinitely more nimble and swift than if they had hands and feet. But it would occupy hours were I to tell you of the many excellent lessons which this good man by such means tried to instil into my mind, and had I not been deeply prejudiced against him by the servants who surrounded my person, and had not my mother, by her ill-timed indulgence and injudicious observations, have

completely destroyed the effects of those disguised lessons, my character might yet have been preserved. But, alas! in a fit of passion I one day behaved so insolently to him that he told my father he could no longer undertake the charge of a child whose disposition was bad, and who repaid all his labour with ingratitude. He left us, and from that time my morals took a retrograde step; the little good I had derived was not sufficient to be of any essential service—*desires were enkindled, but principles were not fixed.* Unfortunately, too, about this period war was declared, and my father was summoned to join his regiment." Here, Agnes, I interrupted him, and asked "whether his father was in the army, and to what regiment he belonged?"

"Yes, lady," said the stranger, "my father, as he told me, joined the army to banish recollections of grief at the loss of his own revered parents."

I turned deadly pale, and leant against a tree to support myself from sinking. The youth looked alarmed. "I have wearied you, madam, with my recital, but there is a joy—a grief—an undefinable sensation caused in the mind by taking a retrospective glance at by-gone days, and I forgot that you were standing. Pardon me, can I do anything for you?"

"No," said I, making a violent effort to conceal my emotion, "proceed; I am intensely interested."

"But, young lady, you had better hear the rest another day; you are so feeling, so compassionate; you cannot bear too much. May you never endure misery like mine, but may you bask in unclouded sunshine all your days!"

"Continue," said I, "I am anxious to hear the conclusion." He bowed, and thus continued, "My father, madam, was colonel of the——regiment, and never shall I forget how he pressed me to his bosom on the morning of his departure, while a tear forced its way down his manly face. 'My son,' said he, 'it may be that I shall never embrace you again. It has been justly said "that war is a malady which infects princes," yet think not that I shall shrink in an hour of danger; no, I have pledged myself to fight for my king and my country, and I will do so manfully, like a good soldier; but for a moment, for *one* moment (and he put me from him) earthly ties bind down my spirit, and plead too, too strongly.'

"He then took an affectionate leave of his wife, exhorting her to take care of herself and their darling boy. He begged that my education might no longer be neglected, but that I should be made diligently to apply to study, and urged that in case he perished I should be brought up to an honourable profession, but not that of arms, unless my taste strongly inclined that way. Once again he clasped me to him, and taking the brooch which he wore himself, placed it in my hand, saying 'Here, child, this was the last gift I ever received from *my* venerated father. Keep it for my sake, and mind that you never part with it. Its value is immense, and cannot be replaced. I give it *you*; it is the greatest treasure I possess. Receive it as a token of my love, and when you hear that I lay slaughtered on the field of blood, among friends and foes then undistinguished,

a martyr to the cause of liberty, you will remember this ornament was the parting donation of your father's father. Oh! Alphonso, if you were to imitate *him* you would indeed be happy."

"Alphonso! did you say—Alphonso?" I exclaimed. "Tell me, quickly, I beseech you, is your surname Maltravers?"

The youth gazed at me in surprise, "Gracious heaven, madam, how came you to ask such a question? That is indeed my real name, but my assumed one is Anderson."

I uttered a faint scream, and unable any longer to restrain myself I said, "Then you are my own cousin, Alphonso Maltravers, my own dear cousin."

It was now his turn to manifest emotion. "Impossible!" said he, I do not know your name, nor did I ever hear of such a person as yourself."

"Nevertheless," said I, "I am not deceived; I am certain Maltravers was my mother's maiden name. She and a brother called Alphonso were the only children of the Rev. Daniel Maltravers, bishop of Calcutta."

"Ah! do you say so?" exclaimed the stranger. "Then there is no longer a doubt of our relationship, for often have I heard my father speak of his beloved sister Eleanor, and express a wish that he could hear tidings of her. But he wrote several times to her, and receiving no answer concluded she had died of grief for the loss of her parents. He never even heard of her marriage. Does she still live?"

"Alas! no," said I, while tears involuntarily coursed each other down my cheeks at the mention of

this beloved object. "No, I have a sad, sad tale to relate some day, but not now. Be contented to know that she is an inhabitant of a happier world, and that I am her only child; but come, let me introduce you to my father; come, Alphonso, it ill befits the son of Colonel Maltravers to sue for bread, and to be an outcast from society. Come, and when you are refreshed, I will hear the rest of your history."

"Ah! dear lady, I cannot consent to this. I am not worthy to bear the honourable name, nor to be acknowledged as a member of our once distinguished family. I am a fallen degraded being, and all I will accept (O pardon my boldness) is that brooch. Bitterly did it grieve me to part with it, but dire necessity compelled me. I sold it several years ago in London, and obtained for it a sum sufficient to provide me with food and lodging for a time, and after that was gone I became—what?—a housebreaker—a robber—and all but—a murderer. I have twice been sentenced to transportation, but have escaped." "Unhappy youth," said I, "what can I do for you? My father loves me," (but then, Agnes, the thought rushed into my mind that I was myself suffering from his displeasure, and that possibly it might be so increased when he should hear how I had met with my cousin, that he would refuse to notice him.) I could not tell Alphonso my fears, so I continued, "my father loves me and I trust he will do something for you."

"No," answered he, uttering a deep groan, "it cannot, it must not be. I should only bring eternal dis-

grace on you ; you could not save me from the rigour of the law. Vengeance pursues me, and money, rank, influence will not avail. I must fly. I have heard Lord St. Clair's character ; he is the proud descendant of a family, whom fortune never persecuted, and think you he would own such a wretch ? Or think you," said he, as every vein swelled with the intensity of mental agony, "that I could ever brook to be dependent on one with whom I once was equal in fortune, station, everything. I require a hard thing of so young and so innocent a creature, but I beseech you by all the respect you feel towards the memory of our departed sires, that you will never mention me to Lord St. Clair. The hours are passing rapidly away, and I fear your absence from the family will raise suspicion. Yet once again we will meet and then—then—I will terminate—"

"O wretched young man !" said I, interrupting him, "be not so rash, so mad as to involve yourself in still deeper guilt. Greatly as you have incensed the Majesty of heaven, there yet is mercy. The day of grace is not past, there is hope."

"Hope" echoed he in a hollow tone, "of what?"

"Of pardon," I replied. "O Alphonso ! 'though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow,' if you will bend your knees in supplication, and plead the all-toning blood of your Redeemer. 'He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

"But *I* have rejected his counsel, *I* have stifled conscience, *I* have hardened my heart. There is no mercy for me."

"As you value your immortal soul, my cousin, talk not so. 'The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.' Let hope revive, and live a repentant sinner."

"Where shall I live? Yon wood has been my habitation for the last fourteen days, and my food the fruits which I have gathered. Your bounty the other day relieved my more immediate wants, but I am afraid to lodge in the town."

"Whither do you think of going?" I asked.

"I know not, but I shall wander from place to place till justice overtakes me."

"If I provide you with the means, Alphonso, can you fly the country, and embark in some vessel bound to a land where you are not known."

His countenance brightened. "This *might* be effected," said he, "if I could disguise myself. Could I reach America or Australia without detection, I might dare to associate with my fellow-creatures once again without fear, but—"

"But—present no other obstacles, you shall go. I will furnish you with money, and every other requisite, if you will promise, *faithfully promise*, to banish from your mind all thoughts of self-destruction. Your life is not your own, Alphonso, you are indebted to your Maker for every breath you draw. He made you and he alone has a right to destroy you. His purposes are not yet fulfilled in you, or he would himself have sent forth the command that death should perform his errand and cut you down in the spring-time of life. It may be that

as you refused to yield him your heart when he loaded you with his favours, he designs now to awaken you to a sense of your spiritual danger by causing you to pass through the furnace of affliction. Strive not, then, against your Creator; listen not to the suggestions of the tempter, venture not to plunge unbidden into that unknown world, from whence you can never return. If you cannot endure the pangs of conscience, while yet your Saviour is willing to receive and pardon you, how can you endure *eternal* torment in that dismal place where mercy never enters, and when your offended God ‘shall have sworn in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest.’ ”

“Thou art an angel sent from God to stop the deed which, I confess, I had meditated,” said he, “and if I am permitted to escape the fury of my foes, I will yet brave the rest, but to mount the scaffold like a felon, and to consent to the ignominious death of a public execution, I could not submit to. I would mock at my destroyers, and—”

“And be blotted from the ‘Book of Life,’ ” I exclaimed. “O! my cousin, pause, ponder, think, and seal not your own perdition by such an act. But tell me, how came you in such circumstances, and by what misfortune were you spoiled of all your earthly goods?”

“I have already overpowered you,” said the youth, “we will meet again to-morrow.” “Be it so then, Alphonso, but ere you go take this ornament you so much value, and remember, I restore it to its rightful

owner on condition that he will submit to be directed by me as to the course he shall pursue henceforward."

"Aye," said he, seizing the offered brooch with almost delirious joy, "aye, I will do *all*, *any* thing you wish for *that*."

"You give your word."

"I do."

"Then I am happy. Farewell! God bless you!"

Upon leaving him, my whole frame was most violently agitated, and every chord of feeling vibrated. I hastened to seclude myself in my own room, and, bolting my door, gave vent to my emotions. I was bewildered. It appeared to me so miraculous that I should ever have purchased that brooch, and still more so that Alphonso Maltravers should have been led to Henley. The whole affair had been mysteriously ordered, and I could not help thinking there was some hidden good to be derived from it. Once, and again, I resolved to inform Lord St. Clair, and more especially did I consider it my duty to do so, because I had that morning received a letter from your mamma, in which she seemed to censure me for concealing such an affair, but then I remembered that she did not know *who* or *what* the stranger was, and that under the present circumstances she might herself have deemed secrecy advisable. I reflected that it was impossible Alphonso should appear in public, or be openly acknowledged, situated as he was, and I felt convinced that to be dependant on such a man as my father, would be more humiliating to him than absolute beggary. Besides, Agnes, I thought it more than pro-

bable that Lord St. Clair's proud spirit would refuse to own one who had so disgraced himself, and then my equally proud cousin would, doubtless, in the frenzy of despair, have committed what I so much dreaded—an act of suicide. I thought it therefore more prudent to conceal within my own heart, all the sorrows that oppressed me, and joined the party in the drawing room. Miss Charlton wondered where I had been, and told me that Lady Claudine and Sir Alfred Villiers had called to invite me to walk with *them*, as I had refused to do so with *her*, and that when she was told I was out alone she really had begun to fancy my brain was slightly disordered.

I evaded a direct answer as well as I could, but really think *I should* have been charged with temporary insanity, had any strangers been present.

Nothing could possibly have been more vexatious than to hear that Sir Alfred Villiers had called, because he was sure to have imagined what my engagement was; but he has left the country now, and as I shall most probably never see him again, his opinion of me is of comparatively trifling importance. Still it is much more pleasant to be thought well of than otherwise, and had I had an opportunity of introducing the subject, I would *in part* have explained my apparently strange conduct, but he evidently avoided entering into conversation with me after the occurrence related in a former letter. I met Alphonso only three times, and each time did fate decree that *he* should cross my path. He called at our villa to take leave of us, but I was out, which I have

ever since regretted, but if I say more, I know you will fancy what I will not confess even to myself. So away with this subject, he is banished from my sight and from my recollection.

Let me now continue the history of the unfortunate Alphonso. "I am anxious," said I, as soon as I met him, "to hear what became of you after your father joined his regiment." "In a very few months, Miss St. Clair," said he, "his gloomy predictions were verified, and the heartrending intelligence was conveyed to us that Colonel Maltravers was amongst the number of the slain. For a long time my mother yielded to the most violent grief, and refused all comfort, but at length, observing my health visibly decline, and the physicians telling her that unless I had change of air I could not possibly survive during the approaching winter, she roused herself for my sake, and we hastened to a warmer climate. I derived benefit from the change, but the fretfulness of my temper greatly retarded my recovery. Time, however, works wonders, and by the end of the next summer, I was at the head of a mischievous little group of urchins at a large preparatory college for young gentlemen. Scarcely a day elapsed without heavy complaints being made of my disobedience, insolence, and inattention, but my fond though foolish mother prohibited any punishment being inflicted, alleging as reason, my delicate constitution and tender feelings. Alas! madam, I possessed *no* feeling at that time. I had always been led to consider *myself* and my own desires before every one else, and I cared not what others felt or suffered, so long as

it did not inconvenience me. Years rolled on, and at last I was sent to Oxford to complete my education. I began to feel something bordering on shame at my excessive ignorance, and resolved on entering the University to make the best use of my time, and for the first year I abstained from mixing in any of those circles into which that curious society divide themselves. My study was desultory—a little of one thing and a little of another, but still my mind began to expand, and I acquired the reputation of *un homme savant*. However, I soon grew tired of such a life, and joined in the wild practices and extravagant habits of other collegians. My demands upon my mother were enormous, and she at length wrote and told me that although her income was good, and sufficient to enable us to live even in splendour, I must retrench my expences or I should involve us both in ruin. This was the first time she had ever reproved, or even contradicted me, and I could not bear it. I called her unkind, said she knew nothing about a young man's expenses, and declared that if she refused to satisfy my creditors, I must borrow of some one else, until I could engage in some speculation to find means of obtaining money for myself. This reply wounded her deeply, for she loved me *too well*. I was her idol, and to render me happy, I believe she would have gone through anything herself, but alas! she had mistaken the way to make me happy, and had fancied that in indulging my every whim, she was showing her love, but oh! she did not reflect that when I associated with the world, I *must* be thwarted, contradicted, and opposed,

and that therefore I ought to have been accustomed from my childhood to *little* trials that in mature years I might have been able to bear *great* ones. But she lives no longer, and in respect to her memory I will be silent. I loved her dearly, and many a tear have I shed in thinking of all her kindnesses. She paid my numerous debts, but fresh ones were soon incurred to such an amount that for very shame I could not again address my parent. Yet what was to be done? I knew not, when one evening I chanced to stroll with two or three others into a kind of bazaar where music and raffling were going on. At one end several gentlemen were playing at cards, and on another table were some dice. One of my companions challenged me for a throw. The game pleased me: I won several times that evening, and my desire to play again increased with my success. I secretly procured some dice and amused myself in trying to discover the art; at last I succeeded, and made myself quite master of it. I visited a gambling house, played for small stakes and won everything. A mania seized me. I returned again, staked largely, and still won. Delighted that I had discovered a method of replenishing my purse, I was heedless of everything, and soon acquired the character of a gamester. My mother heard of my proceedings and admonished me to overcome so ruinous a propensity, but I was maddened with success and could not stop, till one day on entering my apartment I found a letter saying that my mother was dangerously ill, and wished to see me immediately. Thunderstruck and deeply grieved I did not delay a moment in making the necessary

preparations, and in a few hours I was at her bedside. She was dying—O God! the agony—the remorse of that hour—I raved, I wept, and in a state of insensibility was carried out of the room. Reason returned and I desired the attendants to conduct me to my mother, but the doctors said that unless I could control my feelings, I must not be permitted to see her, as it would accelerate her death. I bid them all defiance, rushed into the room, and threw myself on my knees. I implored her forgiveness and promised to be in future a dutiful son. ‘Alphonso,’ said she, in an almost inarticulate voice, ‘it is now too late. The anxiety of my mind on your account has caused a fever which baffles medical art, and in a few hours I shall be a stiffened corpse. I have left you *all, all* I possess, but if you continue to frequent the gambling house, you will assuredly come to an untimely end.’ She clasped my hand, gave one deep convulsive groan, and expired.

“Oh, madam, what I felt no language can describe, nor shall I attempt it. I abandoned my gay companions and lived in sullen solitude; my domestics dared not address me; my acquaintances did not trouble themselves about me. I knew nothing of accounts, and left the management of my affairs to my steward, who was an unprincipled and profligate man. My expenditure was trifling, for I kept little company, but my bills astounded me, and far exceeded my income. I complained of injustice, dismissed all the servants, and hired fresh ones; but these used me no better, and I became embarrassed. Again, with the madness of a demon, I took to play, but

my luck had changed. The first night I lost a large sum, the second the same, and so on for a week. Desperate at my ill fortune, I ventured once again by one tremendous stake to win back what I had lost, but I failed, and saw myself stripped of all my fortune. My establishment was broken up, my house sold, my character gone, and I was left with nothing but my plate and jewels. I knew no means of earning my livelihood, and was too indolent to learn any, so I parted with these articles one by one, till last of all I sold that brooch. What ensued I have already told you, and now can you feel compassion for such a wretch? Can you own *me* for your cousin?"

"Yes, Alphonso, I pity you from my inmost soul, because I am inclined to think your errors have proceeded rather from an improper education than an ill disposed heart, and I am willing to hope that now you perceive them so clearly, you will endeavour by your future steadiness to make amends for the past. You must leave the country beyond a doubt, but use the utmost care that you effectually disguise yourself. I will provide you with all you require, and I advise you not to prolong your stay here, beyond what is absolutely necessary."

"I made enquiries yesterday," said he, and heard that the 'Hope' leaves London within a week for Philadelphia."

"But what can you do, when you arrive there?"

"At present I know not, but I must seek employment of some kind. I have always had a taste for

chemistry, and if I could take out a few drugs, I might succeed in setting up a chemist's shop; I know nothing else that I *could* do. But pardon me, can you assist me without the knowledge of Lord St. Clair?"

"Yes," answered I, "I have property independent of my father. I will give you the sum of £500 to establish yourself, and in case you should be distressed, I will also give you a few valuables which you may be able to convert into money. Then here are notes to the amount of £50, to pay for your passage, and supply your wardrobe."

"Oh my benefactress, my friend, my cousin, how can I repay such generosity? How can I show my gratitude?"

"Alphonso," said I, "my mother's dying request was that should I ever hear of her beloved, but long lost brother, I would for her sake notice him. He is no more, but you are his representative, and what I do for *you*, I regard as a sacred duty. I would that I had met you in other circumstances, I would that I could welcome you to our table, and introduce you to our friends; I would that you had maintained your proper station, but you may yet appease offended heaven, you may yet recover your character. Go, and by a life of industry and virtue recover what you have lost of this world's goods, and at the foot of the cross humbly seek for grace. It would be very gratifying to hear of your safe arrival and well doing, and I hope you will write to me when you have an opportunity."

"I will," said he, and kneeling at my feet, he

seized my hand, bedewed it with tears, and prayed that blessings might be showered down upon me.

"Kneel not to me, Alphonso," said I, "but to that great power which has inclined and enabled me to benefit you. But I fear I must stay no longer, or I shall be sought for. Drop me a line ere you embark, that I may be satisfied your pursuers have not discovered you. And now," continued I, vainly endeavouring to repress my sobs, "adieu! a long adieu! may the God of Heaven preserve and bless you!"

He could not utter a syllable, but his heaving heart and swimming eyes spake more forcibly than language. Ten days after this interview, I had a note to say that in the disguise of a common labourer he had contrived to travel unknown, that he had provided himself with every requisite, and was that morning to leave his native country—*for ever*. To hear of his departure was a great relief to my mind, dear Agnes, for I felt a constant dread lest anything should happen to him, and the circumstance of being obliged to maintain such secrecy, made the suspense infinitely more painful. You are the only person to whom I have related this affair, and I know it is unnecessary to caution you not to disclose it. Your own sense of prudence will induce you to silence on such a subject. Miss Charlton left Henley last week, and I confess I did not experience any regret at parting, yet I hope I am not wanting in affection. I would do her any kindness if she stood in need of it, but there is no congeniality between us, and without this *can* there be love? I am sure I must have exhausted your patience,

and you will begin to think this an interminable letter,
so without another line, I beg you to accept the sincere
love of

Your unaltered friend,
MERELINA.

LETTER XXXII.

AGNES TO MERELINA.

Rectory House.

MY VERY DEAR MERELINA,

I have just finished the perusal of your long
and entertaining letter, and the contents occasion me
both surprise and sorrow.

The history of Alphonso is remarkable, and affords
an irrefragable proof of the evils arising from a defective
education. It is an old simile to compare the human
mind to a garden, which, without cultivation, is indeed
barren and unfruitful, producing only the rankest weeds.
These grow apace, and speedily impart their noxious
qualities o'er the whole surface, unless there be some kind
fostering hand near to eradicate them, before they are
suffered to reach the summit of perfection : flowers *may*
be thrown in amongst the weeds, and with care and
attention the soil may be made to yield what is agree-

able, even though it be in some degree tainted by its former productions. Your cousin appears to me to be possessed of strong feeling and natural abilities, and whilst one is obliged to censure his conduct, pity predominates over every other sensation, and causes one to feel regret that such a plant should not have fallen under the pruning of a more skilful gardener, since every imperfection that has displayed itself in the growth, must be traced to the improper treatment of the nursling, when first the opening bud began to shoot forth.

I think you have acted right in not mentioning the affair, for, as you observe, it was absolutely necessary Mr. Maltravers should have left the country, and to have exposed him to his relatives, who felt no interest in him, could have been productive of no good, and possibly might have done serious evil to himself.

I am now going to be very angry with you, and severely to reprimand you for indulging in such melancholy forebodings, as fancying you are going to die. Your mind has lately been much harassed, and you are becoming nervous. Change of air, and variety of pursuits, is all you require, and as I am allowed to be an excellent nurse, the immediate purport of my writing is to request you will, as soon as possible, honour us with your company at _____. You say Lord St. Clair will be frequently in town during the next four months, then seize this opportunity of leaving home; you will be less missed than at any other time, and your temporary absence may effect much good, and be a means of recovering his lost favour. When his Lordship returns to his

villa, during the intervals of business, and feels how lonesome it is, uncheered by the smiles of her who was wont to meet him with such joy, and pay such ready obedience to his commands, he will reflect upon the cause of her absence, he will think with regret of his own unkindness, he will acknowledge that it was on *one* occasion only she resisted his authority, and he will be compelled to confess that on that one he ought not to have wished to exercise control: his former love will revive, and when he meets you, it will be with all the kindness of a doting parent. Thus do I represent the issue of a visit to my own mind, and if you cannot take the same *coup d'œil* of the affair, it is because your indisposition predisposes you to survey the gloomy and darkened side of the picture, instead of that on which the brightness of noon-day shines. When the nervous system is affected the mind has a tendency to imbibe erroneous ideas, and to indulge in imaginary evils, until they are infinitely more terrific than real ones, and I am convinced if you will yield to my entreaties, and pass a few weeks amongst those who tenderly love you, and who feel the deepest interest in your happiness, you will soon be restored to health and cheerfulness. I can fancy myself left alone in a spacious mansion for only a few *days*, without a single associate, and when evening closes in, drawing my chair towards a table at one corner of a large apartment whereon my evening repast was spread, and indulging in a *triste* reverie o'er the many changes I had seen, and the troubles I had endured. Why, I assure you my dear girl, though I am by no means inclined to be supersti-

tious, and enjoy an excellent state of health, I should, in such a situation, be troubled with a thousand gloomy fears, and should begin to fancy the osseous fragments on my plate were endowed with life, and the moving draperies around the room concealed behind them some supernatural forms.

Poets may expatiate on the charms of solitude, but I am persuaded we were not designed for such a life. There is a sympathetic feeling, a secret force, an internal *something*, which links us to each other, and makes us desire an interchange of sentiments, and a mutual communication of ideas. Our faculties were not bestowed for ourselves alone, our understandings were not exalted above those of the brute creation to shine on inanimate objects like sepulchral lamps, nor were the beauteous flowers of earth intended

“To waste their fragrance in the desert air.”

If it be manifestly destined that we should live shut up in some remote spot, away from all our fellow-creatures, we ought to endeavour to render ourselves happy, to improve our talents, and to lay in a stock of useful knowledge. We might in such a case find amusement in inspecting the various operations of our minds, marking our ruling propensities, checking our unhallowed desires, repressing our vain thoughts, correcting our prominent foibles, and seeking to bring our unruly wills into subjection. We might also, by the perusal of books, enlarge our limited and contracted views, and, by the study of the Book of Wisdom, correct our erroneous opinions, and become acquainted with our own hearts.

We might contemplate the wondrous machinery of the frail tenement which confines within it—what was originally formed in the image of its Creator—the soul—and we might notice the symmetry and proportion of each separate member of the body, till we were obliged to exclaim with the poet,

“Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long.”

But still I do not think that we should *choose* solitude, and more particularly does it strike me as absurd that a blooming young lady of scarcely eighteen, possessing power, wealth, and influence, should voluntarily bury herself, because her path is for a while obscured by sorrow. No, it will never do, dear Merelina; cheer your spirits, and brave disappointment; smile placidly on your foes, and show that they have not power to disturb the serenity of your mind.

I promise, if you come to ——, you shall not be annoyed by the bustle or gaiety of our house, for both Wallace and myself prefer domestic quiet to a life of dissipation. I will tell you how I spend my time, and leave you to judge how little leisure I have. Every morning we go to church at nine o'clock, with all our domestics, where Wallace reads prayers; we return to breakfast, and soon after (weather permitting) I visit those of my neighbours who are sick or distressed, administering, as well as I am able, to their spiritual and temporal wants, in which “labour of love” I am assisted by my husband. The rest of the morning I devote to walking in my garden and attending to little domestic

duties, while Wallace is in his study preparing sermons, lectures, &c. After luncheon we usually ride on horseback for an hour or two, and the evening we spend sometimes alone, and sometimes amongst our friends. There are in the neighbourhood several very worthy and agreeable families, and altogether my life glides on very smoothly, but I do not always expect such uninterrupted happiness, my friend; by and by there will doubtless be some alloy, some pressing care, some anxiety to warn me that this is not my rest, and that "I have no abiding city here."

I find nothing more humiliating or productive of good to myself than visiting the poor, and amongst the villagers there is one family which interests me particularly. They live in a little cot beneath a gently rising hill, and a few tall and stately poplars which rear their lofty heads in front, serve scarcely to conceal the spire of the church. Within those plastered walls there dwell a widowed Christian mother, and her only child Margaret, an interesting girl about fifteen years of age, who is in a deep decline, and whose pale and faded cheek you cannot contemplate without being convinced that she is not long for this world. When I called a few mornings ago she was resting on the bosom of that mother whose tears in spite of every effort *would* flow as she watched the agonizing pain which tortured her daughter, and felt conscious that no power of medicine could rescue that beloved object from an untimely grave.

I was about to offer consolation, but she said in a sweetly resigned voice, "I bow, madam, submissively to

the decree of a just and holy God who knows what is good for us far better than we do ourselves ; I kiss the chastising rod, but O ! nature *will* feel, and a mother's heart *will* yearn over her own offspring. She is my only child, the Benjamin of my soul, and to see her suffer thus, without the power of relieving her, is very hard, but God's will, not mine, be done."

"Mother," said the sweet girl, "weep not for me. My Saviour endured more than this, and never murmured." "Yes," said I, "we must not distrust the goodness of God, for it is in love that he afflicts us, 'Even as a father chastiseth the son whom he delighteth in !'"

"He is very good to me, Ma'am," said Margaret, "for he has blessed me with kind friends, who procure me every comfort, and we ought to be very grateful." "I am sure I strive to be so," answered the woman, "and when I feel inclined to be discontented, I read of Job, and all his trials, and with him I exclaim, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not likewise receive evil ?'"

"And perhaps dear Mother, it may be for good if I am taken from you," said the dying girl; "perhaps you love me *too well*."

"You must not doubt," said I, "that it will be for good ; your child will be far happier than ever you could make her."

"And to wish to detain her in such a troublesome world is selfish ma'am, I know," said the weeping mother. "Yes, I submit. I resign her." We then knelt down, and prayed for the assistance of God's holy spirit to make

us concur in all his designs ; after which I bade them adieu, promising to call again shortly, and really improved by what I had witnessed. I could not help repeating those lines of Thomson's—

“ Father of light and life ! thou good supreme !
Oh ! teach me what is good ! teach me thyself !
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice !
From every low pursuit ; and feed my soul
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure :
Sacred, substantial, never fading bliss.”

I contrasted my own situation with that of this desolate widow, and I felt how little cause *I* had to repine if *she* could feel grateful and resigned.

And so, dear Merelina, would I have *you* think of those who are *more* severely tried than yourself, rather than of those who are *less* so, because the former recollection will excite thankfulness, while the latter will only lead to despondency.

But I have lengthened my letter far beyond what I at first intended, and shall reserve the remainder of my news till we meet. Wallace desires me to say that he shall be in town next week, and if you can arrange with Lord St. Clair to conduct you thither, he will experience real pleasure in being your escort to —

My dear mamma unites with me in kind love, but she leaves me to-morrow. In vain have I endeavoured to induce her to prolong her stay ; she assures me it is really necessary she should return to Woodstock, and remain there until her lease is expired, which will be in

about eight months, but after that time I trust she will choose a residence a little nearer to mine.

Requesting an early answer, I shall once again sign myself

Your friend and well-wisher,

AGNES FITZ-WILLIAMS.

LETTER XXXIII.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Henley-upon-Thames.

DEAREST AGNES,

You are in very truth my Mentor, whose wise counsels and salutary advice are to me, like the pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night, to the Egyptians. You have convinced me that it is wrong to yield to such immoderate grief, and I am resolved you shall see that I can exert myself, and acquiesce in the will of the Almighty.

I told papa the contents of your letter, and contrary to my expectations he urged me by all means to accept your kind invitation, saying he thought it would be highly beneficial to my health, and conducive to my happiness, "for," observed he, "I shall frequently be obliged to visit the metropolis for the next four

months, and as you do not seem willing to take up your abode there, you must necessarily be very lonely if you remain here."

On hearing him thus plainly express his wishes, I did not hesitate a moment in making up my mind, for all those whom I respected have quitted Henley for a season. The Marquis Raimondi, with his amiable daughter, the lady Claudine, left for Brighton, very soon after the departure of Sir Alfred Villiers, and besides them and lady Selby who is almost entirely occupied with the cares of a young family, there is no one in the neighbourhood whose society I care for.

I shall therefore accompany papa to town on Monday next, and with great pleasure confide myself to the care of your best beloved, if he will not consider the charge of me a burden, but I have known Wallace from a child, and had many a game of romps with him, so I need apprehend nothing from this cause. I believe Lord St. Clair has apartments at the _____ hotel at the west end of the town, and requests me to present his compliments, and to say he shall feel honoured if Mr. Fitz Williams will sojourn with him during his stay in town.

Your mode of life appears from your description so enchantingly delightful, that I am doubtful if you will soon get rid of me, dear Agnes; and believe me when I assure you that nothing could possibly have afforded me more real joy, than to hear that you have found what you so richly deserve—a happy home. Your worthy partner and yourself quite answer my own ideas of how a country clergyman and his wife in the higher class

ought to spend their time. There are many in that station who indulge in such laxity as scarcely, nay, *not at all*, to distinguish themselves from the world, and others again there are who conduct themselves with such Puritan strictness, as almost to terrify the young and inexperienced Christian, and make religion appear in an uninviting and unattractive form. I shall not be accused of flattery, I hope, if I say that you appear to have chosen the happy medium, to combine piety with cheerfulness, and conscientiously to fulfil the duties devolving upon you, without any unnecessary rigidity of manner.

I must tell you that I have seen Mrs. Ponsonby since her return home, and she has promised to write me an account of the proceedings at Henley, during my absence.

How fondly do I anticipate the pleasure I shall experience in being once again embraced by my more than sister, and assuring her how much I am

Her devoted and affectionate

MERELINA.

LETTER XXXIV.

MRS. PONSONBY TO MERELINA.

Woodstock.

In compliance with your earnest entreaty, my dear young friend, I take up my pen for the purpose of giving you information concerning one, about whom you are naturally more concerned and interested than any other, but I lament that it will not be of a very pleasing nature. If you will, as the rich heiress of a powerful nobleman, allow yourself to be influenced by *me*, now you are your own mistress, as entirely as you used, during your infant and unreflecting years, when incapable of judging how it was proper for you to act, I shall advise you to return home immediately, and express a desire to spend a short time in town with his lordship. For this sudden change in your determination, you must allege your improved health, which I am happy to hear from Agnes is much better even in this short time, and your consequent ability to support the bustle of a metropolis life, but on no account must you allow him to suppose that you have heard what is on the *tapis*.

I am unwilling to break the intelligence to you, because I am fearful it will cause you pain, but you

know my love there *are* occasions on which we must overcome and suppress our feelings, and act with firmness and self-control.

You must have frequently observed Lord St. Clair's excessive partiality for the beautiful, but artful, girl whom he chose for your companion, and you must likewise have seen that *her* aim was to fascinate the high-minded and elegant Sir Alfred Villiers. She failed, for he possessed too much penetration not to see through her design, and to resist her coquetry, but, in revenge, what has she done? Disappointed in her own hopes, and indifferent to her fate, she has sought another and a surer victim, and it is now confidently asserted, that she has made a conquest of your noble father's heart, and that he is everywhere seen in company with Lord Charlton's eldest daughter. I fear this is too true, for, during the three weeks you have been absent, he has only visited Henley once, and a few days ago he sent workmen to make some alterations in the house, with orders to be as expeditious as possible.

I can enter fully into your feelings as you read this intelligence, and hear that your excellent mamma's place is to be filled by one so unworthy, and so little your senior in age, but I think it more than probable his lordship will not acquaint you with his intentions until everything is finally settled, and I wish to prepare you for the event, that it may not come too suddenly upon you. Lord St. Clair was mistaken in the character of his first wife, and refused to bestow upon *her* the love she so richly merited. In the young lady he has now

selected he will find one whose views coincide with his own; and one who has no more sense of religion than he has himself, from which we may naturally conclude that he will feel for her all the ardour of first love, heightened by the contemplation of her superior *external* charms. He is now, I presume, upwards of forty years of age, and Miss Charlton only in her twenty-second year; she will doubtless possess unlimited power over his mind, and as she is not partial to you, may probably exercise it in a manner detrimental to your comfort. It is right therefore you should be at home, and enquire what his lordship's intentions are with respect to you, as it cannot for a moment be expected you will consent to live constantly at home, under the dominion of such a step-mother.

I confess to you that I have long had a secret dread that this would be the *dénouement* of the affair, but resolutely forbore hinting any suspicion until it was publicly mentioned; yet now, my dear girl, you are called upon for exertion; you must not sit and exhaust yourself in bitter tears, and unavailing regrets, but you must display a spirit, and show this usurper of your rights that you are not to be quite a cipher. Far be it from me to excite unchristian-like tempers in the mind of one, about whose eternal interests I am far more deeply concerned than about any temporal events which can possibly happen to her, but there are times when it is expedient for even the meek-hearted disciples of the lowly Saviour, to reprove and condemn. There are seasons when it is proper to manifest a degree of dis-

pleasure, and such an one, I think, is the present. It is not twelve months since you lost your invaluable mother, and for Lord St. Clair to think of contracting a marriage in so short a time, with so frivolous a character, is indecorous—to say nothing worse. Your presence may be a little check, or, at any rate, it will oblige him to be less frequently in Miss Charlton's company, as he cannot at all times leave *you*, and, though I do not think it will set aside this union, it *may* possibly defer it a little.

I trust you will not be offended at my plainness, but receive my advice as it is intended, and, above all, do not suffer yourself to feel too deeply hurt at this occurrence. If you have allowed yourself to think at all, you must almost have anticipated something of the kind would take place before long, although I confess I did not imagine it would be for a few years. I would have you take now another view of the scene, and endeavour to discover the purpose of the Almighty in submitting you to such a trial. Your home has not yielded you the happiness you fondly hoped, for it is utterly impossible that those whose views are widely opposite should dwell long harmoniously together.

Perhaps his lordship may propose that you shall have an establishment of your own, where you can pursue your own inclinations, form your own plans, and choose your own associates, and, as I presume you have made no determination to live and die an old maid, it may be that although Dom Manuel was rejected, some more fortunate suitor may be admitted to your retreat

to share its pleasures with you. Changes are constantly taking place in things animate and inanimate ; the affluent sink to indigence, and the indigent rise to affluence : the brightness of noon-day bursts suddenly on the afflicted who have long been lingering in gloomy shade, and gathering clouds burst with tremendous vengeance on the prosperous who have dwelt only in perpetual sunshine ; the sickly are restored to health, and the hale are stretched on the bed of languishing. We look around and witness these mighty transformations, and with a sigh we exclaim, " Such is Life."

My own situation and occupations are greatly changed, and, instead of being blessed with the society and charged with the education of two young and amiable creatures, I am now alone, and left entirely to my own resources. Happily those are numerous, and I have attained that age when life's young dream is o'er, and anxiety or suspense respecting my fate is no longer felt. All my hopes are for another world, and all *my* desires that I may be admitted within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, and be permitted to sing everlasting songs of praise to the lamb that was slain for my transgressions. Yet I can sympathise, my dear young friend, with you, for I have been a girl myself; I would, however, advise you to let trouble wean your thoughts from earthly things, and your affections from worldly objects. Aim at an elevated standard of piety ; go on from strength to strength ; rest not with low attainments ; but " let your light so shine that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in

Heaven ;" stand forth a glorious example on earth, and "when the last trumpet shall sound, and the quick and the dead shall be summoned to the tribunal of the Lord God Omnipotent, you shall receive a crown of life" and inherit the highest rewards of the blessed in heaven.

Yours most sincerely,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XXXV.

HON. MISS CHARLTON TO THE BARONESS DE ROSNY.

Portland Place.

No doubt you conclude from my long silence that I am either asleep or dead, but I assure you neither is the case, my dear Almira. I am in excellent health, and tolerable spirits, although happiness is out of the question any longer. True, I have been despised, slighted, and forsaken by the object of my adoration, but think you that I shall sit down and weep myself into a statue? Not I. This would only render *myself* miserable, and to endure *alone*, increases suffering ten, aye fifty fold.

I am going to be married, and am busily engaged in making preparations for the occasion. But who do you think to? I know you will never divine, and as I love to

tease people I shall not tell you just yet; but since I have been in Portland Place, I have of course had numerous offers, for none but that obstinate and phlegmatic Sir Alfred could ever behold me without losing their hearts. I have accepted the one least likely to be approved by the world, but as I can never feel anything beyond common regard for any one again, I have chosen him whom I fancy I can manage best.

Sir Henry Beaumont as I expected, called upon me shortly after my arrival, and solicited of my father the favour of my hand, but although he was very well to amuse me with his nonsense, and fulfil my commands, he would never do for a husband. He thinks too much of himself to pay any regard to a wife. He tried to look concerned when I rejected him. "Fickle! inconstant girl!" he exclaimed, "then you encouraged me only to deceive me, and to crush all my hopes in the dust. Unhappy man!" and he assumed such a look of mock sorrow that I could no longer preserve my gravity, "to what art thou destined? Fly, fly to some far distant land, nor ever again suffer thine eyes to behold the light. Cruel! to laugh at my sorrow," observing the smile which played on my features. "I thought thou wert an angel, but thou hast not an angel's feelings; thou art insensible—unworthy of my esteem. I go." As he uttered these words, he vanished. I am perfectly aware he admired my fortune more than myself, (for he is *very poor* though he has a *title*) and I indulged in a hearty laugh at his disappointment. I know you will be dying to hear who is the highly favoured one. Well, then,

Mon Dieu! how surprised you will be, it is no other than Lord St. Clair, but I would have you remember that although he is old enough to be my father, and moreover a widower, yet he is a handsome, fine looking man, with elegant manners, and immense fortune. But that detestable daughter, something *must* be done with her, for I have told his lordship that I shall not like a daughter-in-law so nearly my own age. I am sure if she is in the house with us, she will be sermonizing from morning to night, for I shall certainly never think of spending an evening without company, and this will shock her. He told me I need not be apprehensive of being annoyed by her, for it was more than probable she would spend some months with her friend, Mrs. Fitz-Williams, and that if she did not during her visit there meet with some one who could please her fastidious taste, he should propose her having an establishment of her own.

My fears relieved on this subject, I consented to receive his lordship's addresses, but one thing still disquieted me. I feared that Sir Alfred Villiers might return to England in the course of a few years, and make Miss St. Clair his happy wife, for I am certain he thought more highly of *her* than of any one else he ever saw, until I made him believe that she was carrying on a secret *amour* with a young man greatly her inferior, but of course if he returned, and found her single, he would conclude it was only a childish indiscretion, would soon recover his good opinion of her, and *I*, Almira, should be more intensely wretched than I am now. They are both so good (for in spite of my

aversion, I am compelled to allow this) that they could not fail to live in perpetual bliss, and to disappoint him of happiness is the only way in which I can be avenged for his rejection of me.

"How," do you ask, "*can* I prevent this from taking place?" *N'importe.* Be satisfied to know that I *have* most effectually prevented it.

Lord St. Clair has taken a house at the West End, and furnished it magnificently. We are to spend the honey-moon at Paris, for it will only be by keeping myself in a constant state of excitement, that I shall be able to conceal my indifference and disappointment.

But surely a man of his years must be miserably deluded to fancy a girl of my age can feel *love*, that is to say, *conjugal love*, because when I am in the prime of life, he will be cross, old, disagreeable, and peevish, but it won't do to look into the future now; the die is cast: my word is given, and my peace of mind must be the sacrifice.

There is one consolation for me, which is, that it is the fashion of the present day to pay excessive homage, and almost oppressive attention, during *courtship*, but *after marriage* cold neglect, and marked disregard, so if this is the case with me, I can still encourage a flock of admirers, who are always ready to listen with deference to the heartless discourse of a woman of fashion and beauty.

I am too much occupied to write any more at present and for the last time sign myself,

Yours,

JOSEPHINE CHARLTON.

LETTER XXXVI.

LORD ST. CLAIR TO HIS DAUGHTER.

Albany Hotel.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I have taken up my pen, but I scarcely know whether or not to address you, conscious that what I am about to communicate will awaken no very pleasurable sensations in your mind.

I have delayed writing as long as possible, fearing to give you pain, but as it can be no longer concealed, I must summon up resolution to tell you, that I have met with a lady every way calculated to render my life happy, and to prove a lively and pleasant companion.

Our marriage will be solemnised at St. George's Church, Hanover-Square, to-morrow, in the presence of a numerous circle of mutual friends, but in consideration of your delicate health, and the regard you bear for the memory of your mother, I have not invited you to join the party.

Miss Charlton is the object of my choice, and I think you must allow that I could not have selected a more lively and amiable bride, had I searched from Pole to Pole. But as I fear your disposition is rather inclined to sullenness, while her's on the contrary is

exceedingly gay, and as there is so little difference in your ages, possibly you might *both* wish to usurp authority in my house. I therefore think it will be better to have separate establishments, although as my daughter, I beg you will consider my house your home, when you may feel inclined to make it so.

I have endeavoured to render you happy, and had you not obstinately refused Dom Manuel, you might have been so: he is now united to one capable of appreciating the honour he intended, and therefore all hopes with respect to *him* are at an end. Further, I shall not attempt to influence your choice, and unless you degrade yourself by a *very* unequal match, I shall not again interfere.

With respect to pecuniary affairs, I have taken care that you shall not be dependent on my future lady, but have settled upon you three thousand a year for life, which in addition to the fortune left you by your grandfather, and the fifty thousand pounds of your mother's, will secure you from want. The remainder of my property will of course be my wife's.

I cannot help adding that I am greatly disappointed in you, for I had fondly hoped *you* would have proved a solace and blessing to me, but your temper appears bad, and your mind discontented, otherwise I should have been happy for you to have dwelt with us, and to have been the companion of my Josephine.

Wishing you well, I remain,

Yours faithfully,

ST. CLAIR.

LETTER XXXVII.

SIR ALFRED VILLIERS TO THE HON. CHARLES
MELVILLE.

Jerusalem.

Well, Charles, did I not lead you to expect that my next letter would be dated from some outlandish part of the world? And so indeed it is. Who would have fancied when I purchased that beautiful little place at Henley, that I should have so soon deserted it! But I am persuaded when any uneasiness preys upon the mind, there is nothing so calculated to divert one's thoughts as travelling. I am now quite myself: I have recovered my usual cheerfulness, and have overcome the passion which I confess I was inspired with while I fancied Miss St. Clair a being of so superior an order. Never again will I form an idea of marrying, unless when I am going down the hill of life I meet with some congenial mind.

Perhaps you will think from this sentence, that I entertain a very high opinion of myself, but I assure you I do not. I know I possess a thousand imperfections, and in the sight of a just and holy God, I am vile and worthless. I am not, therefore, so absurd as to expect to find *perfection* in another, but *consistency of conduct* I cannot dispense with.

I had heard this young lady talk much of the beauty of truth, and I had even heard her censure the custom of persons compelling their servants to deny them to visitors, simply because it was not convenient to see them. "Why," said she, "do we not tell them we are engaged, or subject ourselves to a slight inconvenience, rather than encourage and absolutely teach our domestics to utter falsehoods." Yet when it answered her purpose, she practised deceit upon her own father.

Again, she frequently spoke of the duty of children making bosom friends of their parents, and of the impropriety of having secrets from them, yet she herself requested me to conceal from her father my having seen her engaged in conversation with a young stranger, and three times to my knowledge did she meet him clandestinely. Nor are these the only charges against her, for I have heard that her temper is tyrannical at home. My cousin Claudine, who is a most amiable girl, and never allows herself to repeat mere gossip, told me that she had engaged one of Miss St. Clair's discarded lady's maids to attend upon her, and that she had heard from her with the deepest regret that Miss St. Clair was most overbearing and violent to her inferiors. "I refused to listen," said my cousin, "to anything she might say, for I greatly deprecate the habit of entering into familiar conversation with one's domestics, but from various remarks which she *would*, in spite of all my commands, make upon this young lady, I fear we have been rather deceived in her character."

I have heard of company looks, and company smiles,

but I should hardly have imagined features so exquisitely
soft could have been distorted by rage.

When I was in Sicily, where we stopped for a short time, I obtained a sight of an English paper, and perused with some astonishment the following paragraph. It was inserted in the Morning Post, and couched in these words:

"MATERIALS IN HIGH LIFE."

"In the evening month, Lord St. Clair will
have his daughter, Mrs. Josephine, eldest daughter
of the Earl of Chichester, at Charter Hall, Herts.; and very
soon after he expects the arrival of Mrs. Merdina, only daughter
of the Earl of Merton, who is to be united to Lord Merton, and
will reside at Tunworth."

... we think I am surprised at the
way in which Mrs. St. Clair affects party.
We do not know what party he was in
when he died, but we do not think it at all
likely that he was a member of any party.
Mrs. St. Clair was a democrat that time.
He was a democrat all his life, and
he was a democrat to the very end.

with the dead, and my name known no more on earth.

I am now in Jerusalem, that city of the Hebrews, so interesting for its ancient history, and the memorable events which took place in it, when the persecuted "Jesus of Nazareth condescended to leave his Father's glory and pass thirty years among a rebellious and gainsaying people!"

The situation of this wonderful city is on an elevated piece of ground, enclosed by hills, and rising high above a deep ravine in the south, is Mount Zion, so often mentioned in Scripture. I ascended the celebrated Mount Moriah, on which the temple stood, the *only* temple for formal worship which the whole country contained. I say *ascended*, but the interjacent valleys have gradually filled up so much, that it is scarcely an elevation. I visited, too, the Mount of Olives, where the rejected Saviour of the *Jews* more particularly, but also of the *Gentiles*, sat and foretold the destruction of the beautiful fane which rose before his view in such majestic grandeur.

"Tell us," cried the doubting disciples (as they listened with amazement to his predictions) "when shall these things be?" "The time draweth near" was the reply.

Twas here, too, that Jesus resorted when in all the anticipated agony of his cruel death, huge drops of blood issued from every pore as he prayed for courage to drink the bitter cup, the price of man's redemption, O as I thought of this "Man of Sorrows," my heart was penetrated with fervent gratitude, and if I ever prayed in spirit, it was then.

Thousands of pilgrims annually resort to Jerusalem, to visit the church which they suppose contains the sepulchre of Christ, and to redeem this from the sacrilegious hands of infidels, was, I believe, the first and principal object of the Crusades.

Jerusalem itself does not exceed two miles and a half in circumference, and there are seven gates in the high embattled stone wall which surrounds it. What a variety of emotions are enkindled on surveying this once magnificent city: it is still a decent looking town, but O how fallen! how fallen!

Overwhelming indeed must have been the feelings of King Agrippa when he witnessed the final catastrophe of Jerusalem, and thought of the pathetic address of the zealous apostle, and his own deep convictions of the truth, as he listened to him. So impressive and eloquent was Paul, that Agrippa, after striving in vain to stifle the workings of his own mind, was compelled to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Almost! alas, how many are *almost* persuaded, convinced of the necessity, but still led captives in the chains of "Mammon."

It is my intention to remain some time longer in this place, and then I shall proceed to Mecca. I shall now conclude, and need scarcely remind you that a little English news will be pleasing to

Your old friend,

ALFRED VILLIERS.

LETTER XXXVIII.

MERELINA TO LORD ST. CLAIR.

Rectory House.

DEAR AND HONORED SIR,

My emotions on perusing your letter can be more easily conceived than described. Who can have injured me so in your opinion ; who, my lord, can have represented my character to you in so unamiable a light ? Surely some secret, some unknown enemy. My temper bad, my mind discontented, my disposition sullen. O these are heavy charges against your own child, and I hope they are not *true* ; I hope I am not so unworthy of your love. How gladly, how cheerfully would I devote myself to your service, were it permitted ; how happy would it make me to be your solace, and the comfort of your declining years. I beseech you listen not to the voice of prejudice, but reflect for a moment ; allow yourself to think over my conduct, and tell me, when and on what points have I ever shown the slightest objection implicitly to follow your directions.

Once only, my father, have I disobeyed you, and shall your resentment continue through life? will you never forgive your own, your only child?

But—but—my tears flow as I write ; you have now

a wife, and she is the object of your thoughts, your love.

Thank you that I envy her—ah, no! She has a claim upon you, a right to your regard, yet do not quite neglect the daughter of your first, your best, your sainted Eleanor. If she has offended you, she humbly sue[s] forgiveness, and begs you to attribute her faults to inexperience, and not to premeditated wickedness.

She will detain you no longer, but subscribe herself
Your very dutiful, but deeply wounded,

MERELINA.

LETTER XXXIX.

MERELINA TO MRS. PONSONBY.

Rectory House.

My dear, my valued, my almost only friend, how shall I open my heart to you, or display to your view the many passions which agitate my troubled soul.

Alas! your communication arrived too late to permit me to follow your excellent advice, for by the next post I received from Lord St. Clair himself the astounding intelligence that the following day was to unite him to the only being on earth towards whom I feel ~~dislike~~ alike. O madam, what shall I do, how can I act? Aid me by

your counsels, and remember me in your prayers. Was ever sorrow like unto mine?

Now do I feel the advantage of having had such a person as yourself to form my mind—now am I called upon to exercise all those virtues which you early implanted, and nourished with a mother's care—now do I remember the many lessons I received from you, and your oft repeated declaration “that the business of education is not to produce a perfect *pianiste*, or a skilful artist, or an elegant dancer :—but a creature capable of reason, accustomed to thought, guided by principle, and fit to contend with, and support the trials of life.

I fall short, infinitely short, of being all this, but yet I am better able to support my fate than if I had been educated less carefully. I grieve because I cannot help it, but I grieve not as one without hope. I trust my late trials have led me to examine more deeply into the state of my heart, and to discover for what indulged sins the God of heaven sees it necessary to afflict me so sorely. Mercy can find no pleasure in inflicting pain. I am certain that not *one* chastisement is without a design ; not one less would suffice to purify me from the dross of indwelling sin, and so I will try and rejoice in the dispensations of an all-wise Providence.

My dear Agnes wishes me, under the present circumstances, to remain a few months with her, and I confess I am inclined to yield to her entreaties, for to return home would be out of the question yet. I should be considered an intruder, and if I were *not*, after my father's letter, I should *feel* so. Eventually I *must* take

a house for myself, but I do not feel disposed to do this until I have wearied my friends with my company, and my health is more perfectly re-established. Mr. Fitz-Williams' sister Julia is staying at the rectory. She is exceedingly pleasant, and enlivens us all by her drollery. In spite of my sorrow she frequently occasions me to laugh à *gorge deployée*, for you know I possess naturally a quick sense of the ridiculous, and Julia's mimicry of some eccentric characters is perfectly irresistible. The children of a Mr. and Mrs. Murray, who have just come to reside in this village, afford Julia ample opportunity of exercising this dangerous, I allow, but amusing propensity.

These people are retired citizens, and as they maintain a very genteel appearance, Agnes deemed it proper to call upon them, for the wife of a pious clergyman is not expected to carry herself *too high*. I must tell you that Mrs. Murray never had her health in town, and therefore prevailed upon her husband to take a house for her in the most retired part of Herefordshire, where she purposed devoting herself to the education of her family, which consisted of one son and two daughters. Mr. Murray being engaged in his counting-house from morning till night, and thinking only how he could amass heaps upon heaps of sordid gold, seldom visited his lady, and when he did, he had no time to notice his children further than reckoning in how many years he could make fortunes for them. Mrs. Murray, soon after her marriage, became what the world calls very religious, and having been led into a great deal of gaiety when

young herself, she resolved to pursue the opposite extreme with her children, to debar them from every innocent and lawful recreation, and to refuse them all society, lest they should be contaminated. She would not even allow her son to be sent to school, but kept him entirely under her own dominion, until reason told her it was essential he should have other instruction. She then engaged masters to attend him at home, but as at the age of 21, he will come into possession of a large fortune, left him by a rich uncle, he has been brought up to no profession, but suffered to spend his time in idleness. This mother imagined she was doing her duty, nor discovered her error until the education of her children was completed, when she was both hurt and shocked to find that in society they were awkward, embarrassed, and deplorably deficient in manners. Excessively disappointed at the ill success of her plans, she consulted with her husband, who is really well educated and gentlemanly. Satisfied with the wealth he had acquired, he gave up his business, resolved immediately to take a house in some more fashionable neighbourhood, and at once to introduce his family into a respectable circle, but I fear it is almost too late. The characters of these young people are already formed, and it will be a matter of surprise to me if they ever overcome entirely their *mauvaise honte*. Never shall I forget our first introduction. Agnes, Julia, and myself, made a morning call. We found Mrs. Murray pleasant and easy in her deportment, and conversed for some time on indifferent topics. The two young ladies were

working beautiful lace veils, but they sat like statues : we introduced a variety of subjects, but could get nothing beyond a monosyllable, and sometimes only a simper. Their mamma observed them with concern, and I, with pity, for they seemed really to feel uneasy. Presently the son appeared, and I confess it was with the greatest difficulty I could repress a smile. He was evidently not aware that any strangers were there, but it was impossible to retreat, so with a very bad grace he made a kind of side long bow, and seated himself as near the door as possible. He is what most people would call *pretty*, with fair complexion, light hair, inclining to sandy, and blue eyes. Julia, who is by no means coy, soon aroused him from his reverie, by asking him "whether he did not think this a very beautiful part of the country."

"Very pretty, indeed, Miss."

"Are you an admirer of scenery ?" asked Julia.

"Why yes, Miss, I am."

"What do you think of the view about St. Vincent's Rocks?"

"I don't know, Miss, I never walk that way."

"How surprising ! These rocks are the attraction of the place."

"I suppose so, Miss."

"Perhaps you are very studious, and don't allow yourself much leisure," continued Julia, determined to draw him out.

"He, he, he—I don't know as to that, I am sure, Miss."

" You read a great deal, I have no doubt."

" Not much."

" How do you employ yourself, then?"

" He, he, he—Miss, why I *think* a great deal."

" Do you? Well now what do you think of my reticule," said Julia, showing him the one which hung on her arm, and which was beautifully embroidered in chenille.

" I think it is very pretty; very pretty, indeed," said the simpleton, " did you work it yourself, Miss?"

I had been listening to this dialogue, while Agnes and Mrs. Murray had been engaged in apparently very interesting conversation, and, unable longer to preserve my gravity, I said, " Really, Julia, it is very conceited of you to *display* your work, do you not think it is, Miss Murray?" turning to one of the sisters.

" It is a monstrous handsome reticule," observed the young lady.

" My sisters have got a parrot, Miss, very much like that on your bag; would you like to see it?" said young Murray to Julia.

" Above every thing," answered she, " I like any thing that can *talk*."

" Then I'll fetch it," said he, rising.

" It can say a great number of sentences," observed Caroline Murray, speaking for the first time since our entrance.

" How amusing!" I replied, seizing this auspicious moment, and endeavouring to get into conversation.
" I suppose you teach it yourselves."

"My brother William teaches it more than we do," answered she.

At this moment he returned, and Julia said in a gay tone, "Then I have at last discovered how you occupy yourself, Mr. Murray."

"He, he, he—Miss, well I'm sure it is a very innocent way of spending my time; don't you think so?"

"And very *intellectual* too," said Julia, "'to teach the young idea how to shoot,' is a most *laudable* way of spending one's time, and I am sure I don't see why parrots should not have ideas as well as human beings."

"Caroline's a scold!" "Caroline's idle!" vociferated the parrot.

Caroline blushed and looked rather silly at this unexpected developement of her character, so to relieve her, I observed that the latter declaration was decidedly incorrect, for she had scarcely lifted her eyes from her work the whole time we had been there, and from her countenance I was convinced there was no more truth in the former assertion.

"I'm really shocked," said Julia, "you do not instil a love of truth into your intelligent pupil, Mr. Murray. It is very wrong to teach deception."

"It's quite true Miss, I assure you, all that the parrot says, for my sister *is* a scold."

"I'm sure it's a story," said Caroline in a more elevated tone than I should have supposed possible.

Mrs. Murray regarded her daughter with surprise, and soon after this we took our leave, not at all favorably impressed. Agnes declared she could not visit

such people, but Wallace said, he hoped we should call upon them occasionally, for the young ones might possibly improve upon acquaintance, and it was not Christian like to treat any one with contempt.

Julia, who is the merriest creature imaginable, thought it would be highly diverting to call upon them occasionally, and Agnes, ever ready to yield to the wishes of others, said she should have no objection to this, as she really thought Mrs. Murray lady-like, well informed, and religiously disposed, although she depended too much upon her own judgment, and both misunderstood and misapplied Scripture. A few evenings ago Julia and I took a walk after dinner, and by way of passing an hour, again called upon Mrs. Murray. The conversation took an agreeable turn, for Mr. Murray was at home, and he is both witty and entertaining. We forgot how time was passing until the "shades of evening had closed around" and rendered it impossible to return alone.

Mr. Murray bade us feel no uneasiness, and politely offered to escort us home, saying he was sure his son would feel pleasure in assisting him. I purposely placed myself next him as soon as we were outside the door, for I knew Julia was much better able to rally the son than I was. *We* walked nimbly for it was getting late, and I was fearful of increasing my cold, but Julia and her sprightly companion lingered far behind, and did not reach the rectory until nearly half an hour after us. She then told me that she had been trying to see what he really was made of, and had dis-

covered him to be a compound of ignorance, stupidity, and conceit. Once when they were passing an orchard filled with apple trees, well loaded, being quite at a loss for conversation, he said,

“ Miss, do you love apples?”

“ Exceedingly,” she replied, with as much gravity as was possible on such an occasion.

Another long pause.

“ Have you travelled much, Miss?”

Thinking the conversation was now taking a rational turn, Julia replied with some spirit “ Very little indeed at present, but I have a particular desire to do so.”

“ And so have I, Miss. You have been to Wales I think Miss.”

“ I spent last summer there, and was much pleased with the scenery ; I went up the beautiful Snowdon, which rises”—

“ Yes, Miss, I know that’s a beautiful river ; it rises in—in—bless me ! I quite forget.”

“ This beautiful *mountain*, ” said Julia, affecting not to hear him, “ rises to the height of 3658 feet, and the view from the summit is most magnificent.”

“ I dare say it is, Miss,” but anxious to change the subject, said, “ don’t you feel tired, Miss?”

“ Particularly so,” said Julia, “ I scarcely know how I shall get home.”

“ Lean on my arm, Miss ; perhaps it will help you.”

Yet fearful that Julia should think this *too tender* an attention, he said, on reaching the rectory gate, “ I hope you won’t think I meant any thing, Miss.”

She stared, unable to comprehend his meaning.

"Why, la! Miss, you know I shall soon have five thousand a year, and that will be a very pretty thing; and there's many a young lady would be very proud to be called Mrs. ——"

"O!" exclaimed Julia, while the whole truth flashed into her mind, it is unnecessary to give yourself any alarm, for I am not apt to—"

"No, Miss," interrupted he, "only you see as I paid you great attention, I *thought*—"

"You have convinced me, Mr. Murray, that you *really are a very great thinker*, so I wish you good evening; upon saying which she ran to her own room, and gave vent to her feelings in almost hysterical laughter. In this situation I found her, and with extreme difficulty she managed to compose herself sufficiently to relate what had passed, when *my* mirth almost equalled her own.

Even Wallace allowed that after *this* it would be as well to take no further notice of the family, but Julia will never forget this occurrence, and declares, if she is an old maid, she will set young Murray down as having been one of her beaux.

I wonder what Lord Chesterfield would have thought of such a young man; it is really surprising natural sense does not teach people better, but I am quite of opinion that nothing forms the manners like good society. It is useless to lay down rules, and to study books, without frequent opportunities of practising those rules. Nothing certainly denotes ill-breeding so

much as an ungraceful address, and a constrained manner.

You will perhaps feel surprised that in my present circumstances I should write such nonsense, but I have yielded to grief, until Agnes declares I begin to look quite old, and I really feel the necessity of exerting myself a little. I am quite undecided for the future, and hope to receive a letter of advice from you very shortly.

Affectionately yours,

MERELINA.

LETTER XL.

MRS. PONSONBY TO MERELINA.

Woodstock.

Your letter which I have just received is highly gratifying, and convinces me that my labor has not been in vain.

It has indeed been my endeavour to educate you, not for *time* but for *eternity*, and to fit you to become like an evergreen, bright and beautiful, not only during the short summer of youth, but lovely still when frosts prevail, and winter overtakes you. To aid you as far as it is in my power by my experience, will ever afford

me real pleasure, although your own judgment is usually correct enough to depend upon. You cannot do better than remain where you are at present, especially as you find your health and spirits improving. Lord and Lady St. Clair have been to spend a few days at Henley, but it was only to give orders about various alterations and improvements. Report is very busy just now. In the first place it says that his lordship is not quite so happy as he anticipated being with his young wife, and that her dissipation and expensive habits really alarm him. In the second place it says that Lord Merton is now at his house near Bristol, and that it is expected he will very shortly be united to Miss St. Clair, as he is frequently at the house of Mr. Fitz-Williams, Rector of ——, where this young lady is now a visitor. This latter intelligence was conveyed to me through the medium of the Morning Post, and I confess surprised me exceedingly, as you have not even told me that you have *seen* him since you left Henley. I cannot believe that you have consented to such a thing, but still, my dear, there must be grounds for such a report, or no one would have dared to put it in public print. I observe that in the latter part of your letter you say you consider it your duty to rouse yourself, and I greatly commend you for such a resolution, for as "not to mourn at all is insensibility," so "to mourn without measure is folly." But surely the attentions of the gay Merton have not effected this revolution in your feelings; surely you do not mean to wreck your earthly happiness, and your eternal salvation, by uniting

yourself to such a man, for he is infinitely more unsuitable for you than Dom Manuel. Be not rash, my love, the storm will abate ere long ; you will not always be thus tried : your prospects will brighten ; and deem not your earliest friend impertinent, if she presumes to advise you to deliberate a little longer.

IN CONTINUATION.

I have just heard that Lord St. Clair is seriously unwell, and that he has come to his villa at Henley, unable to bear the constant bustle in which his lady keeps their town residence. She has not accompanied him, as she declares it is just the season for enjoyment, and protests she shall be moped to death if she comes to that horrid place.

Her Lord resigned his authority into her hands at *first*, and therefore to attempt to assume any *now* would be useless, although one would fancy if she possessed common feeling, she would wish to be with him.

I cannot learn precisely the nature of his malady, but I believe he caught a severe cold, which produced violent inflammation of the lungs, and not being sufficiently careful, it has been succeeded by a hollow cough, which allows him no rest, and incapacitates him for exertion.

Perhaps your company might be agreeable to him in his solitude, but if you address him he will wonder by what means you have heard of his indisposition, and fancy perhaps that you endeavour to pry into his affairs. I have been thinking therefore that it might be advisable

for me to call upon him. He will consider this only as a mark of respect he is entitled to from me, and will be satisfied as to the manner in which *you* have become acquainted with his illness.

Do not at all alarm yourself, as no danger is apprehended; but his lordship, like all persons who depend upon others for amusement, is low spirited, and much hurt at the neglect of his wife. You will perhaps wonder how *I* heard so much, but I have not been well myself for several days, and yesterday I sent for Doctor S—— who attends Lord St. Clair, and he gave me this information.

I fear I shall be too late for the post, and must conclude abruptly, merely adding that I am as ever,

Your sincere friend,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XLI.

MERELINA TO MRS. PONSONBY.

Rectory House.

Ah! my dear madam, how am I afflicted at your intelligence! My dear papa ill, and I not permitted to attend him. Surely if he loved me he would forget his anger, and request me to visit him, but not all his

unkindness shall ever make me forget that he is my parent, or prevent me fulfilling my duty as well as I am able. To what can he now have recourse? What will amuse him now? Alas! the world will not care for him longer than it can derive benefit from him, and Josephine, whom he has indulged, flattered, caressed, for *her* to treat him thus. O cruel girl! Go, my kind friend, and administer consolation to my poor disappointed father; go, ask him to let his child—the child whom he has slighted, but who loves him still—to let her come to him. She will try and point out to him where true happiness is to be found; she will try and prove a blessing to him yet. What a heart must Josephine possess! how unfeeling! how insensible must she be! Think you I should displease Lord St. Clair very greatly by coming to Henley unasked? Let me hear your opinion as soon as possible.

And now permit me to undeceive you about the affair with Lord Merton. You do me injustice in thinking that I wish to have any concealments from you, *you* to whom I unbosom myself as to a mother. The report is quite false, but I confess it is not without foundation, and now I will relate all particulars.

About a month ago we were at a concert, and just as we were coming away I perceived this Lord Merton. He was looking at me very stedfastly, and when I met his glance of course I bowed. He approached, and after paying me many compliments too foolish to repeat, he begged permission to see me home.

I declined his attention, saying I was with a party of

friends who were waiting for me. He said he did not know I had any acquaintances near Bristol, and enquired "where I might be staying?"

I very thoughtlessly told him, for it never entered my mind that he would call upon me, but to my great surprise, a few mornings after, as we were all sitting at work, the footman announced that a gentleman wished to see Miss St. Clair, and in walked Lord Merton. I felt confused and scarcely knew what to say, but this man did not appear the least embarrassed. He introduced himself to Agnes, and hoped she would excuse the liberty he had taken in calling, but declared it was utterly impossible to know Miss St. Clair was within a day's journey, without doing himself the pleasure of paying his respects to her.

I only blushed, and whether Agnes from this fancied he was not an object of indifference to me, I cannot say, but she replied to him very politely, and observed that any friend of mine would be most welcomely received by her.

Encouraged by her affability, he said "Friend! Madam, would that I dare lay claim to such a title! would that I were indeed regarded as a *friend*!"

I believe Julia thought he was actually going to make proposals, for she left the room in haste. Agnes looked surprised, while *I* remained perfectly mute.

"Lovely girl," said he, "may I not at least hope that as you have permitted me to call upon you, you will behold me some day with more favour than you were wont to do at Henley."

I now perceived my foolishness, and replied in a firm and dignified voice, "Indeed, Lord Merton, you mistake if you regard my having told you where I was staying as an invitation to call upon me. You asked a question, and I simply answered you, unconscious that you would take advantage of it. As my father's guest, in my own house, you were a welcome visitor, my lord, but in any other way you must pardon me if I say I shall consider you an intruder."

"You are too cruel," said he, in a low voice, "but I hope you will recall such heart-breaking words ere long, and behold me with—O that I *dare* say—affection." Then addressing Agnes, he entered into a very spirited conversation about the scenery, the society, and so on.

At length to my inexpressible relief he left us, and I explained to Agnes who he was, with what partiality my father had regarded him, what reserve I had always manifested towards him myself, on account of his excessive disposition for gaiety, and by what chance he came to know where I was. Perhaps he fancied that as Lord St. Clair had married again, and I was no longer *an heiress*, I should be glad to receive the attention which I had previously slighted, but he was deceived, and so, my dear madam, are *you* if you allow yourself for one moment to imagine that I shall ever marry for a home or for a protector.

I am at present of opinion that a state of celibacy is the happier of the two, and if I am induced to alter, and to consent to link my fate with that of any other human being, it must be with one of a *very* different

character from Lord Merton. However, I must tell you that he called upon me again, but I refused to see him. He then wrote me a very nonsensical letter, full of compliments, and declared that unless I would listen to his vows, life would be to him unblessed.

I took no notice whatever of this letter, but soon received another, reproaching me for my indifference, and swearing eternal attachment. This one I returned, and added a few lines of my own, to say that I was sensible of the honour he intended, but regretted it was not in my power to grant what he desired.

He would not be satisfied with this denial, but took an opportunity of throwing himself in my way, and implored me not to be so cruel. He asked "what were my objections?" and after many other questions of the same sort, I was obliged to tell him "that I never could regard him in any other light than as a friend of Lord St. Clair's."

I have now, dear Mrs. Ponsonby, made you acquainted with the cause that gave rise to the report of my marriage, but who could have been so mischievous as to insert a paragraph in the paper, I cannot imagine. I did not certainly intend to have mentioned it, because I thought you would consider me weak for repeating such nonsense. I think it is ridiculous for a girl to speak of all the offers she may have had made, especially in my station, because I have no right to flatter myself that half the attentions I receive proceed from any feeling of affection for me, but that they are paid merely as tributes of respect to my rank and my riches.

I wish Lord Merton would transfer his regard to Julia, for she admires him beyond everything, and thinks I must be half mad to refuse him. She says he is just the sort of man she should like, and wonders how Agnes could possibly prefer such a *drone* as her brother Wallace. She protests she would rather have young Murray than a *parson*, but this is only her fun, and I believe she says at all times more than she means, for the purpose of diverting me. If success is a sufficient reward, she meets with it, for she almost exhausts my strength in laughing at her drollery, and I am certainly more indebted to her for my partial recovery, than to all the doctors who have attended me.

Alas! I am now doomed to meet another trial, but you would reprove my want of faith were I to tell you half the fears which agitate me respecting papa. I shall not rest until I have seen him. Do you think he will refuse to let me be his nurse? Poor man! he rejected his Eleanor's love, and Josephine despises *his*.

But when I think of this girl, I know not how to preserve my composure. May God forgive her and lead her to repentance!

Adieu! my beloved friend and counsellor.

LETTER XLII.

LORD ST. CLAIR TO HIS DAUGHTER.

Henley-upon-Thames.

Will my injured and neglected child accept her father's apology, and cheer the few weeks which are perhaps all that are allotted to him on earth by her presence?

Merelina, will you come to your dying, your neglected parent, and tell him you forgive his unkindness?

Heaven punishes me, and justly punishes me, for my neglect of your mother. Add not to my misery by refusing me *your* society. I have wronged you, but reproach me not, for life hangs on so slender a thread, that another blow will snap it asunder, and send me where?—aye, there's the question, where?—Is there a Heaven? I am excluded.—Is there a hell?—I deny it. But come, hasten to my arms. I am alone, yet not quite. Josephine came yesterday, upon hearing I was worse, but she does not love me, although for her sake I have driven from my home my child. She is not what I fancied she was. She was witty, lively, and fascinating in *company*, and I did not know that at at *home* she was insipid, heartless, and sullen. She attributed her occasional fits of gloom at Henley, to the

melancholy tenor of *your* disposition, and I listened to the voice of my charmer, but I am awakened to a sense of the truth now it is too late.

I can write no more. I am ill, and my cough harasses me distressingly.

In haste, I remain,

Your affectionate father,

ST. CLAIR.

LETTER XLIII.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Henley-upon-Thames.

Oh! Agnes, my father is no more, and I am an orphan. I am alone in the wide, wide world, without a single relation, and I feel, but I know not *how* I feel. My poor heart is ready to burst with the overflowings of my grief, and my inmost soul is bowed down with sorrow. "I go mourning all the day, and at night I water my couch with my tears." I look around me for comfort, but there is none, for happiness, but I cannot find it.

"Plant of celestial seed, if dropp'd below,

Say in *what* mortal soil thou deign'st to grow."

Lady St. Clair and myself are now the sole inmates of

this once crowded mansion, but we can feel no sympathy with each other. *She* weeps because it would not be decent to do otherwise, but she feels no regret for the loss of a husband she never loved, and makes more fuss at having to put on a widow's dress than anything else.

This is the day of the funeral: the shutters are all closed, and I am writing by the faint glimmering of a lamp, which casts so pale a ray o'er the room, that I could almost fancy myself in the gloomy regions of the dead. Every moment I expect the undertaker to fasten down the coffin which contains the relics of my parent. How shall I support it? O Agnes, death were nothing, but my father died as he lived—an unbeliever.

When I entered his apartment he was sitting in an easy chair, supported by pillows; his cheeks were sunken, his eyes hollow, and his breathing suppressed. I was shocked, and my first impulse was to utter an exclamation of horror, but remembering how hurtful it might be to him to display any violent emotion, I checked myself, and, throwing myself on his neck, exclaimed, "I am glad to see you up, dear papa."

He pressed me to his heart, and, with tears in his eyes, he said, "I thank you for this indulgence, Merelina, it is more than I expected."

I entreated him not to talk so, to remember that I was his child, and that, therefore, he had ever possessed the right to reprove me when he thought I had acted wrong.

"You have *never* acted wrong," said he, "it is *I*, *I only*; can you love me?"

"Dearly and devotedly, papa, and on this account I wish you to compose yourself, or no power of medicine will avail."

"Medicine, child! you talk wildly. This sickness is unto death: you cannot deceive me."

"I would be the last person on earth to deceive you, papa, but I hope I shall not lose you so soon," and here, overcome by my feelings, I wept bitterly.

"I would fain tarry here a while longer," said he, "but it cannot be: my time is come and my days are numbered, but I go to the land where all things are forgotten and destroyed, and there I hope I shall find rest."

I trembled as I heard him utter such sentiments, but I was so fearful of exciting him that I preserved strict silence.

He looked at me. "Death is destruction," said he.

"Of the body," I replied.

"And of the soul too, Merelina."

"It cannot be, dear papa. That which was formed in the image of God *cannot die*."

"Child! it is impossible, it is unreasonable to suppose that we were created to live a few years on this earth, and there to be cursed and doomed to eternal misery."

"We were not created for such a purpose at first," said I. Man was formed pure and holy, and with power to stand or fall: if he chose to fall, must he not endure, does he not deserve the eternal displeasure of his Maker?"

"Not if Christ died to save him."

"He died to save such as will believe in him, and trust in him: he died for you, my dear, dear papa, if you will accept his offers of salvation."

"Acceptance is out of the question. I can have nothing to do with it, but I shall see and know all soon," and he shuddered. He then said he should like to be left a little while, for he felt sleepy. I withdrew to my own apartment, and on my knees I implored that the spirit of the Most High might descend and enlighten the spiritual darkness that pervaded the mind of my unhappy and deluded father. I wept as I thought of his unbelief, and I prayed that he might not be taken hence until he had been brought to acknowledge himself a sinner, and to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel.

I then went in search of Lady St. Clair, and found her sitting pensively in the breakfast parlour. I approached her, and extended my hand: she grasped it, but neither of us spoke for some time. At length she said—

"What do you think of Lord St. Clair?"

"I think he is dying," I replied.

"You startle me," said she, "I hope you will not tell him so."

"It is unnecessary," said I, "for he feels convinced of it himself."

"But what should I do? I could not see a corpse for the world, I should be frightened to death," said Josephine.

"He is your husband," I said, "and——"

"And I will send for another physician, immediately," said she, "he cannot be properly attended, I am sure."

"Papa has the best of advice," said I, "and we must try and prepare ourselves for the shock we *must* receive. If it is the will of God that we should lose him, we must submit."

"I did not think that he was seriously ill," said she, or I should have accompanied him myself to Henley. I fancied it was only a whim, and I had no idea of indulging it. I think he might have recovered had he had a physician sooner. How shocking to be left a widow! I fear you have frightened him: he looked better when I saw him last. Perhaps the sight of you has agitated him."

At this moment the bed-room bell rang violently, and we both flew upstairs.

Papa had been seized with a fit of coughing, and the attendants, thinking every moment he would be suffocated, had rung for us. As soon as he saw us he beckoned to us to approach: we did so, and he grasped my hand. I supported his head on my shoulder, and tried to soothe him. Josephine asked "if she could do anything for him."

"Nothing," said he, and soon expressed a wish again to sleep. As it was growing late, the attendants advised Lady St. Clair and myself to retire to rest, promising to call us if his lordship were worse.

Josephine complied, but I said *I* should feel more comfortable in being near him, and requested that

I might be left alone. My orders were obeyed, but the physician had an apartment adjoining my father's in order that he might attend him immediately, if necessary. For some time Lord St. Clair slept soundly, and I watched over him with the most intense anxiety, but suddenly he awoke, and cast on me a look that I shall never forget. He was evidently delirious, and in raving accents cried, "O thou image of my murdered Eleanor, begone! I cannot endure to behold thee—thou strange and incomprehensible source of my anxiety—thou secret spell which binds me down to earth—thou disturber of my peace. Ah! thou wilt soon be fatherless, but thou wilt rejoice in my death, and thou wilt curse the author of thy being. Poor child! thou wilt be left alone and unprotected. O, look not so sadly on me—that smile, that sad smile is just such an one as thy mother bestowed on me when she bade me adieu. How she clasped you to her aching heart! how she besought me to love and cherish you, and I have made you miserable. O wretch that I am!"

Exhausted by such strong excitement, he again sunk into a torpor, in which he remained until the morning sun had risen far above the earth, and shed its kindly rays o'er all the face of nature.

When he revived again he was calm and collected, and said, "Merelina, I have altered my will in your favor. I have made you and Lady St. Clair joint heiresses."

"Dear papa," I said, "do not think about this, for I assure you I feel no uneasiness, as I am already well

provided for. Think only of yourself, my beloved parent, for I fear ——" sobs prevented me saying more.

"*What do you fear?*"

"Will you let me pray with you, dear papa? O papa, your deathless soul—"

"Will be lost, if there *is* a hell," he cried. "But it is too late now; time has fled for ever. O Eleanor! Eleanor!" and again he raved: he bade me leave him, and declared the sight of me would accelerate his death, but just as I was obeying him he called me back. "Do you leave me, then, Merelina, leave me to die alone?" and huge tears of bitter sorrow stole down his pallid cheeks. "Do you leave me?"

"No, no," said I, affected beyond description, "I will never leave you unless you desire it."

"Where is Josephine," said he.

"She cannot bear to see you thus," said I, "and therefore has she left the room. Shall I call her?"

"I am dying," he uttered faintly.

Lady St. Clair was at the bedside in a moment.

He took a hand of each, and placing them in one another said, "Henceforth be friends."

We were both deeply affected, and for the first time in our lives we kissed each other. Papa then struggled violently, looked round the room in speechless agony, clenched my hand in wild despair, and the spirit burst its bonds, and left a mass of lifeless clay.

I immediately fainted, and it was many hours before I entirely recovered my senses. When I did so your dear mamma was the first object whom I beheld. She

was bathing my temples, and endeavouring to restore me to consciousness. I threw myself on her bosom, and wept like an infant. She did not attempt to console me at such a time as this, for it would have been useless, but she mingled her tears with mine, and made *my* trouble her's. After a little time she told me that she had sent in the morning to make enquiries after Lord St. Clair's health, and on being told he was not expected to survive many hours, she had ordered a chaise, and ventured to come immediately, recollecting that both Lady St. Clair and myself were very young, and might not altogether despise her assistance. I thanked her for her kind consideration, and then proposed joining Josephine.

She was crying in her own apartment, and at that moment all animosity was forgotten: there was a similarity in our situation which drew us together, and the widow and daughter of Lord St. Clair clung to each other as tried and bosom friends. O that this feeling could have subsisted! At our united request Mrs. Ponsonby consented to remain with us a few days.

At first Lady St. Clair's grief was violent; she refused all sustenance, and all consolation, and made the house resound with her lamentations.

My grief, Agnes, was of a different nature. My heart ached, throbbed, but my tears would not flow. My mind was phrenzied, my senses bewildered. I want a double portion of faith. O may the everlasting arms be kept underneath me, or I shall sink under this last, this greatest, this worst trial. Yea, this is worse to bear than the loss of my dear mamma, because I knew *she* had

left a world of woe, for one of unutterable bliss, and though for myself I sorrowed, yet for her I joyed.

After every arrangement had been made for the fuueral, which will be very pompous, Lady St. Clair desired to know what were my plans for the future. Surprised at being thus interrogated, and that too before my father was removed from the house, my cheeks for a moment glowed with indignation, and I replied rather haughtily that I did not at all know, but that I should not trouble her with my company longer than was absolutely necessary to preserve an appearance of decency.

She then told me that she had written to Lord Charlton to request him to come immediately and bring one of her sisters, that she should remain at Henley until everything was settled, which she hoped would be very speedily, and that after that she should return home to her parents for a time, until the traces of her grief had gone off, and she could throw aside the *sombre* apparel so unfortunately chosen for widows. She said she believed Henley Villa was *her* property, and that she had an idea of selling it, for she never could return to a house where she had seen so much trouble. "Besides," added she, "I am fearfully afraid of a house which I have known to contain a corpse."

This unfeeling speech awakened the painful recollection that it was Josephine who was speaking—the Josephine who had been the cause of all, or *nearly* all my trouble—the Josephine who had ever acted unkindly towards me. I told her as placidly as I could, that I

should see the remains of my beloved parent consigned to the tomb, but as soon as that last sad ceremony had been performed, I should remove to the house of my friend, Mrs. Ponsonby, until I had decided where to fix my residence, for Henley and all it contained would then be objects of indifference to me.'

She begged I would not hurry away from the house, as she had merely wished to know my intentions. I thanked her, but said that my friend was anxious to go to Woodstock, and that I should accept her invitation to accompany her thither.

But I hear footsteps—they come to carry away my poor papa. O this is hard to bear! What shall I do? I see the hearse, and the nodding plumes proudly waving in the wind. I hear the solemn tones of the funeral knell—my heart sinks within me. I can write no more.

IN CONTINUATION.

Nearly a fortnight has elapsed since I commenced this epistle, but indeed, my dear Agnes, I have not had courage to trust myself with a pen. What I have endured none but those who have been similarly situated can imagine. All that my soul held dear is laid in the grave, and placed in its long, last resting place. I sigh o'er the past with regret, and mourn over the futility of earthly joys. Yet how many there are more desolate than myself, for I have still many dear, many kind friends remaining. I am now again at Woodstock—the home of my childhood, and the scene of many a mirthful game. Ah, happy place! what pleasing recollections

dost thou bring to mind! what joyous hours have I passed within these walls! Every room, every piece of furniture seems to awaken the remembrance of pleasures gone by, and all appears as a dream of the imagination.

Am I the same, or am I deceived? Can it be that I am the Merelina whom none could tame, and whose spirits none could regulate, who saw no danger, feared no ill, thought of no trouble.

There is my snug little apartment just as I left it, and there is the rose tree which I planted with my own hand. You will wonder, dear, I dare say, that I should be here, but your mamma and I have entered into an arrangement something like the following.

My doctor strongly recommends change of scene, and is of opinion that Brighton would be better adapted for me than any other place. As it is a pleasant time of year, I have suffered myself to be prevailed upon to comply with his wishes, on condition that Mrs. Ponsonby will accompany me and take up her abode with me. *Her* terms of compliance are, that I will consent to spend the next two months with her at Woodstock, as her lease will then be expired, and she will part with her furniture, &c.

I have experienced much kindness from Colonel Dalglish—more than I could ever have expected from such a character, but those blunt, plain sort of people often possess more real goodness of disposition than those who make so much profession. He is one of the executors, and has behaved very handsomely towards me.

I staid with Lady St. Clair about a week after the funeral, but she treated me with such *hauteur* that I could not submit to remain any longer with her. She has given all the domestics notice to quit, and the greater part of them have solicited my favor. The Colonel has kindly engaged to take a house for me at Brighton, and as soon as he has done so, the house-keeper, steward, and principal servants will go and get every thing ready for my reception. The Colonel tells me he intends to be my visitor for the first few weeks, and I assure you I am deeply sensible of this attention from a man who always treats my sex with contempt, and even with rudeness. I think it proves that though the exterior requires some polishing, the composition is good.

How pleased should I be could my Agnes and her beloved Wallace honour me with their company, but I know at present that it will be useless to ask such a thing; however, I do hope by and by to have the pleasure of receiving them as my guests, and I trust the lively Julia will not refuse me her delightful company immediately. I will try and amuse her as well as I am able, and if I am rather sad myself, there will be those around me who will be gay, but I shall write to her as soon as the time is fixed for my departure.

I now bid you farewell, my ever dear girl, hoping you may never experience the loneliness of heart which pervades the mind of

Your tenderly attached
MERELINA.

LETTER XLV.

MRS. PONSONBY TO AGNES.

Woodstock.

My Agnes must not accuse her mamma of unkindness in deviating from a promise, which was made at a time when she could not possibly foresee what was about to take place, nor think that her affection is less sincere, because she pays more immediate attention to the solicitations of one not so closely related, but still inexplicably dear. I flatter myself, my child, that your mind is too well regulated, and your disposition too kind, to permit you to feel any thing but joy at the arrangement I have made. You are not less the object of my maternal anxiety than formerly, but happily you are now well provided for, and have a husband who is too eager to anticipate your wishes himself, to render it necessary for me to entertain any fears respecting your comfort. With your young friend the case is different. Lovely in her person, elegant in her manners, amiable in her disposition, and possessed of immense wealth, she is left at little more than eighteen without a protector, and exposed to numerous dangers on account of her inexperience. The charming innocence of her mind would soon render her a prey to the designing and artful, because she never suspects malice until she is irremediably injured. When Miss Charlton was visiting

at Henley, *I* plainly perceived how she was working upon the mind of Lord St. Clair, and did all in my power to thwart her designs, yet this sweet girl could not discover the purposes of her *soi disant* friend until her father's unkindness awakened her to the truth. Alas! how base a passion is envy! To what will it not lead those who yield to its dictates! Had Merelina been less beautiful, she had not been the object of Miss Charlton's aversion, but that lady, conscious that Miss St. Clair equalled, if not surpassed herself in personal attractions, every sensation of anger, jealousy, and ill-will towards her arose in her breast, and led her finally to commit acts, for which conscience will assuredly one day bitterly reprove her.

Did I think it right for so artless a young creature as Merelina to be left entirely to herself in an establishment of her own, I should without a doubt comply with your oft repeated request, and spend the remainder of my days near you, for my income is sufficient to supply my own wants. But Colonel Dalglish, who is appointed guardian to this dear girl, though as good hearted a man as ever lived, and extremely kind to her, is yet very ill qualified to advise a delicate young female. At her particular request, therefore, and in addition to the dictates of my own heart, I have promised to attend her to the sea side, and to remain with her until she either thinks proper to change her situation in life, or is old enough to act without an adviser.

Two months, however, must elapse before my affairs can be settled at Woodstock, and during this time Miss

St. Clair has condescended to take up her abode with me. The Colonel as executor will attend to her pecuniary matters, and select a house suitable for the daughter of a nobleman.

On account of her health, her physician recommends her to make Brighton her residence for some time, and when she is weary of this place, she can easily leave for a few months, but her's is a mind not soon sated. Everything is a source of pleasure to her when not oppressed by violent grief, and I hope when time shall in some degree have obliterated the recollections of her severe trials, to see her recover the usual gaiety of her nature. It distresses me more than I can describe to watch so beauteous a flower languishing and pining away. Pray use your utmost endeavours to prevail upon Julia Fitz-Williams not to refuse her invitation, for I think the society of a lively young person will be highly beneficial, and conducive to her happiness.

I should like to see Miss St. Clair the wife of some deserving and pious character, equal to herself in station, rank, and fortune, but young men of the present day, in high life, are so addicted to excesses of every kind, and so entirely enslaved by pleasure, that nine out of ten scarcely know whether they possess a soul at all, or if they know it, they do not seek to rescue one moment of their wasted and *worse* than wasted time, to think of its salvation. *Salvation*—why they would be shocked at such a term, and with a contemptuous shrug protest that such a word was only fit for a methodist parson to make use of. They would argue that it would be time enough to

think about religion when they had exhausted their strength, their youth, their *all* in the service of the God of this world. They would call those who presumed to remind them of death, judgment, and eternity, fanatics and gloomy enthusiasts, and they would treat with ridicule any who dared to declare themselves disciples of the lowly Jesus.

Yet if my young friend will be *happy* she must refuse an alliance with these gay votaries of fashion; she must fly their society as contagious, and must arm herself to resist their insidious attacks.

To enable her to do this she will need a friend, because she is only mortal, and apt to be misled, like all others of her age. She refused Dom Manuel, because at that time Sir Alfred Villiers was constantly in her presence, and in the contemplation of his superior excellence, others appeared to disadvantage. She refused Lord Merton, because he is so openly immoral in his conduct, that no girl, with the least sense of religion, or the least desire for domestic comfort, would venture to risk her happiness with such a man, but when she is thrown into the society of those, who destitute of all real godliness, are *yet* very strict in their observance of external forms, and punctilious in their general demeanour, then, all her discernment and penetration will be necessary, lest she be deceived, and thereby rendered miserable.

Do not, however, think for one moment that I consider my own judgment so very superior, or myself better able to guide her than any other. I do not. But

Miss St. Clair does not appear to have one friend to whom she can look for direction in difficulties, and as I have been entrusted with her education, and am thoroughly acquainted with her character, I hope I may be of some little use to her. It strikes me there would be an impropriety in her taking up her residence at Brighton, unaccompanied by some person arrived at years of maturity, and her guardian a single man of such eccentric habits as Colonel Dalghish.

But it is needless to add more. You will see my motive, and I hope approve my purpose. I shall therefore conclude with many prayers for your welfare, and assuring you of the never ceasing love of

Your most affectionate mother,
ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XLVI.

MERELINA TO AGNESS.

Woodstock.

I can fancy, dear girl, your rejoicing will be almost as great as my own, at what I am about to communicate. Yesterday, a servant was sent from Henley villa, with a letter directed to me, which they said had arrived there a few days before, but which, in the bustle occasioned by Lady St. Clair's quitting the

house, had been forgotten. I opened it with extreme trepidation, perceiving the American post-mark, and to my infinite satisfaction perused as follows:—

“ TO MISS ST. CLAIR.

“ Dear and respected young lady,

“ It were vain to strive to find language to express the deep sense of gratitude I owe you, or to make you sensible of what I feel towards you. It is a feeling similar to that which a man on the verge of a tremendous precipice, would experience towards one who should suddenly snatch him from so awful a situation, and place him on safe and even ground. More than this have you done for me. You have rescued my soul from perdition, my character from ignominy, myself from misery, poverty, and want. You have awakened senses that had long lain dormant, you have inspired hope, you have administered comfort, you have made me happy, and while life remains I will heap blessings on you, and all connected with you, and when I am summoned to appear before the Judge of all mankind, with my expiring breath I will pray for you, and in my last moments I will remember that but for you, I had now been writhing in eternal torments.

“ Perhaps you will reprove me for addressing you thus passionately, but O, dear lady, I am not forgetful of the *first great cause*. I know that you are only the agent of a superior power above, and that it was *he* who inspired you with the disposition to relieve me, who endowed you with such angelic sweetness, and who made

you use arguments strong enough to reclaim all but a demon from destruction.

" But for you, but for you, I should at once have plunged myself in irretrievable distress by committing the last, the greatest, the deepest sin of which a man can be guilty. I had purchased two pistols, I had loaded them ready, and had not the tones of the little instrument attracted your notice, I should on that very day have blown out my brains. I tremble to think of what I *have been*, but I thank God I have found mercy, I have obtained pardon, and resting on the merits of my Redeemer, I hope at last to be received an unworthy but contrite sinner within the regions of yonder blissful world.

" I will tell you all that has befallen me, and conclude the remarkable history of the once wretched, but now thrice happy, Alphonso Maltravers.

" I embarked on board the 'Hope,' bound for Philadelphia, as I informed you, and after a quick but rather rough passage, arrived in safety. During the whole of my voyage I could not help thinking of your words—' Blotted from the Book of Life.' They were engraven in large characters, and were present to my view during my waking and my sleeping hours. I thought of my miraculous deliverance from the hands of my enemies, of the wonderful workings of Providence in directing my steps to the house of one so nearly related, of your unparalleled goodness and liberality, and of my own exceeding sinfulness. I recollect all my disobedience to my kind, but too indulgent parents, my contempt of

their authority, my waywardness, my misconduct towards all who had attempted to reform me, my horrid extravagance, and afterwards my listless inertness. I abhorred myself, and could only exclaim—‘I am vile,’ but *yet* I dared not pray. I thought it impossible that such crimes as mine could be forgiven, or that such a wretch could hope to be acknowledged by men or angels. In sullen silence did I pace the deck, and to my companions I must have appeared morose, unsociable, and unhappy.

“One night a tremendous storm arose, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed, the rain descended in torrents, the waves dashed high, higher, and threatened each moment to engulf us in the mighty bosom of the waters. All was uproar and confusion. Death, gigantic death, with mighty strides, seemed approaching, and hope had sunk into despair. How did I shudder! How gladly would I have recalled those years which I had so misemployed, and how many times did I wish I had spent them more profitably, but they had fled—for ever fled, and I had nought remaining but unavailing regret. I thought this was a judgment from heaven, and that I was to be thus punished for having tried to escape the vengeance of those whom I had wronged. I dared to murmur, and I could not acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence. ‘Why,’ I exclaimed, ‘was I suffered to embark if it were only to be destroyed? Might I not as well have killed myself at once? O, unfortunate youth! Surely evil spirits hover round thee, and doom thee to destruction.’ Thus impiously did I presume to argue,

and to doubt the wisdom of my Creator, and while some of the crew were engaged in using their utmost efforts to save the vessel, and others employed in preparing their minds to meet with composure the death which awaited them, *I only* manifested the utmost discontent, and my rebellious spirit madly reproached its Maker. At length, however, the fury of the storm abated, the boisterous billows ceased to rage, the thick black clouds dispersed: every heart was at rest, and every tongue united in giving thanks to *Him* who had so wonderfully preserved the ship from the merciless power of the elements. And was mine silent? No, lady, no. I was deeply affected at this unexpected deliverance, and for the first time in my life since quite a child, I threw myself on my knees, and ventured to lift up my heart in prayer, and it was no vain mockery, no unmeaning form which I uttered. The words issued from the very depths of my soul, they were hailed with joy in heaven, and through the medium of an all-merciful Redeemer, they were presented to ‘the throne of God.’ For his sake they were regarded: a ray of light shot o'er my benighted mind, I owned myself a sinner, I pleaded, I wrestled, I agonized. My eyes were opened, my spirit broken, my heart melted. I prayed yet again and again, I read the Book of Inspiration, I sought for guidance and direction, and found both. When I arrived at Philadelphia I took lodgings for some time, and as soon as I had made myself a little known, I took a chemist’s shop, and have hitherto met with the greatest success.

“It is true my situation in life is very different from

what it *might* have been, and my pride is sometimes deeply mortified at finding myself excluded from those circles of which I was *once* the head, but I thank God for what he has blessed me with. I feel that I am indeed 'a brand snatched from the burning,' and I hope to show my repentance for past follies, by future wisdom. I intend, as soon as I am able, to repair the injuries I have done others, but *you* I never *can* repay; no, never. If you will condescend, in remembrance of the love that once existed between our parents, to write to me now and then, and suffer *me* to acquaint you from time to time with my affairs, I shall esteem it my greatest privilege, and if in years to come I should dare to appear in my native country, I will at your feet proclaim my gratitude, and offer you all I have—my heartfelt thanks.

"ALPHONSO MALTRAVERS, ALIAS ANDERSON."

Oh! Agnes, how richly am I rewarded by this letter for all I have done for this young man. To know that he is not only in comfortable circumstances, but that he is a believer in Jesus, fills me with unfeigned delight. I have written to congratulate him, and to beg his acceptance of a draft for five thousand pounds, which I shall scarcely miss from my fortune, but which may be of infinite use to him. I have likewise made him acquainted with my circumstances, but I have advised him not to return to England, for I think it would be hazardous at present.

Next Monday we go to Brighton, from which place I shall write as soon as I am a little settled. Colonel Dalglish kindly purposes being there to receive us. I

had an answer from Julia yesterday, saying it would afford her much pleasure to spend some time with me, and leading me to expect her on the following Thursday after my arrival. I shall be glad when this journey is over. I rather dread it, but as I shall travel in my own carriage, I shall proceed slowly, for I am far, very far from well. The least excitement seems quite to overpower me, although my spirits have been better for the last few days. Mrs. Ponsonby tries to rouse me by telling me that the world expects much from me, but *what I am sure I know not*, for I intend to mix very little in it.

With all that is kind and tender,
I subscribe myself once again,
Your affectionate friend,
MERELINA.

LETTER XLVII.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Brighton.

Finding myself at length alone, I shall embrace an opportunity I have long desired of writing my first and kindest friend an account of all that has transpired since I left Woodstock. How to commence I scarcely know, for I have so much to relate that I fear she will be wearied long before she arrives at the

conclusion. However, I think it is better to observe *order* even in writing a letter, so in a very orderly way I shall begin with the journey.

Have you anything of importance to say to Wallace? If you have pray say it now, or you will render him impatient. But how ridiculous I am? I shall have you think I am going to fill a quire, and raise your expectations only to disappoint them, for really, after all, I have nothing *very interesting* to communicate.

Is this preface enough? I think I hear you say, "a great deal too much." I am of the same opinion, so now let me tell you at once, that after a tedious and fatiguing ride, we drove up to a very splendid mansion in Kemp Town, which is situated to the east of the parish of Brighton. The colonel was at the door, and assisted us to alight. He expressed much pleasure in meeting his ward and her *chère amie* as he pleases to term your mamma, and hoped I should be satisfied with the residence he had chosen. I told him I could not fail to be so, and highly commended his taste. How unjust have I been towards this man, but really his manners on our first interview so disgusted me, that I felt prejudiced, and did not give him credit for the good qualities he possesses. No expence has been spared to render this a commodious and elegant habitation, and the delicacy with which every thing has been done, without once consulting me, and thereby reminding me of my unprotected situation, really demands not only my gratitude, but my esteem. The domestics received me with every demonstration of joy, and said they hoped they should

long be permitted to serve their dear young lady. I told them it would be my pleasure to see them happy, and that if my health were restored, they need entertain no apprehensions of being discharged.

"Hem," said the Colonel, for he has not yet left off the horrid habit of "hemming," *I am going to be your doctor myself, Miss St. Clair, for I assure you I mean to pay no bills to these 'necessary evils.'*"

I laughingly replied that I feared I should baffle *his* skill.

"A very ill compliment you pay my abilities," said he, "but I don't mean to be offended with you. To be sure you look a little paler than you used, but *old* bachelors have not the power of *young* ones to bring roses on the cheeks. However, if you will not consider me an intruder, I shall spend a few weeks with you, and try what riding on horseback every morning about the Downs can do."

"Far from an intruder, Sir," said I, "I shall deem your company both an acquisition and an honor."

"Now pray, I beseech you, do not use compliments, Madam, or I shall think you are like the rest of your sex—an unmeaning thing."

"It is not a compliment, Colonel, I assure you, for I am really obliged to you, because, to use your own plainness, it is rather awkward for a girl of my age to be constantly seen abroad without some gentleman, and yet *entirely* to seclude myself on that account would be disagreeable."

"There!" said he, that is what I like, but when

you talk about honoring, and favoring, and other similar extravagant expressions, one feels assured they are only used as compliments."

"I will not offend you again, Sir," I observed, "but suffer me just to say that you will ever be a welcome visitor here, and to beg that as my guardian, you will consider yourself perfectly at home, and give me your advice whenever you deem it necessary."

"You need not tell me that," said he, "for were I to see you giving yourself such airs as some young ladies do, I should pretty soon manifest my disapprobation, for you know until you are one-and-twenty, I shall consider myself privileged to direct you."

"And after that period I hope you will still reprove me whenever I am naughty," said I, smiling.

"Hem!" said he, turning to Mrs. Ponsonby, "we must not keep her too strict, ma'am, or she will turn rebellious."

"I think, Sir, she will be well guarded between us, but she must get a little stronger before she thinks of rebellion. If she were to attempt to run away in her present state, we should soon overtake her."

"Truly so," replied he, "and I should now recommend that as soon as possible Miss St. Clair should retire."

This proposal was exceedingly agreeable, for I felt greatly fatigued, and gladly acceded to it.

Nothing particular occurred until the Thursday, when the gay Julia arrived all life and spirits.

I had previously told the Colonel who she was, and

when I expected her, and had prepared him to meet a lively, generous hearted girl, about nineteen.

He treated her with greater civility than I had expected, for his manners to a stranger are generally most repulsive. It is only since I lost my dear papa, and he has been left my protector, that he has discovered any thing like tenderness of feeling, and I was rather fearful that Julia and he would not agree very well, but to my infinite satisfaction they are upon the best possible terms.

About a week ago we were all walking on the pier, and as a vessel had just arrived from Dieppe, the Colonel proposed that we should wait and see a few of the passengers land. We stood for a short time, but soon it became such a scene of bustle and confusion that we thought it better to direct our steps homeward. I had just withdrawn my arm from the Colonel's to ask Mrs. Ponsonby for my parasol, which she had kindly taken for me as we left the carriage, when suddenly lifting up my eyes, I saw just stepping out of the vessel the well known form of Sir Alfred Villiers. I was so struck that for a moment I entirely forgot myself, but chancing to meet his eye, I saw that he recognised me, and I immediately bowed. He approached me, extended his hand, and said, "I believe I have the happiness of addressing Lady Merton."

"Lady Merton! old fellow," said the Colonel, who heard this speech, "why you've been abroad until you have forgotten people's names. What, don't you remember Miss St. Clair?"

"Could I ever *forget* her," said Sir Alfred. "I beg ten thousand pardons for my mistake; I had understood that—but, indeed, Miss St. Clair, I hope you will forgive me. I am delighted in having the good fortune to meet you here."

I only coloured, for indeed I felt too awkward to speak.

"I hope," added he anxious to relieve my embarrassment "that Lord St. Clair is well."

This was too much, and I could only cast my eyes on my *triste* looking dress.

He seemed much vexed with himself, as he observed and understood my glance, and in a voice of tenderness said, "Miss St. Clair, I have been twelve months absent from my native country, and have not heard much English news, but for the mistakes I have made, I crave your pardon, and hope you will not attribute them to want of feeling. I would rather almost have done any thing than have wounded you, but you are the last person whom I expected to see to day." He then addressed Mrs. Ponsonby, enquired politely after her health, and expressed the greatest pleasure in seeing her.

"Hem," said the Colonel, "I wonder who would have thought of meeting you, Sir Alfred," and he slapped him smartly across the shoulders. "Why I thought you were wandering amid the sandy deserts of Arabia."

"I spent eight months there," answered he, "but the climate did not exactly suit me, so I resolved to return to Italy, and recruit my health, before I proceeded further into Asia. When there, I wrote to my uncle, the Marquis

Raimondi, and soon received an answer, saying he had been very ill for some time, and should exceedingly like to see me if it would not disarrange my plans too much. The respect I have ever felt for the family induced me to comply with his wishes, and I wrote a few hasty lines to say that I would immediately proceed to Dieppe, and embark in the first packet that left for Brighton. I have done so, and little did I think that I should have the happiness of meeting with Miss St. Clair."

"You are vastly polite," said the Colonel, "then you deem it no happiness to meet Mrs. Ponsonby and myself."

"You have no right to draw any such inference from my speech," said he, "and I trust Mrs. Ponsonby has too good an opinion of me to think me capable of such an insinuation." Then turning to me he said, "Have you seen Claudine lately, Miss St. Clair?"

"I have not seen her since I left Henley," said I.

"Then I presume you cannot have been long in Brighton."

"About a month" I replied.

"And has she not called upon you during all that period?"

"I do not suppose she knows of my being here," said I, "and I have been too ill to go in search of company."

"You are indeed looking ill," answered he, "but I hope this air will restore you. Do you purpose remaining some time in this part? I am sure Claudine will regret not having seen you before."

"I suppose you are going to the Marquis Raimondi's," said the Colonel.

"I am, Sir, but as I could not tell exactly when I should arrive I shall take him rather by surprise." We had by this time approached my carriage, which was waiting to convey us home. Sir Alfred, with much politeness, handed us in, and hoped it would not be long before he again enjoyed the pleasure of seeing us. The Colonel said he should prefer walking, but I fancy it was only to have an opportunity of speaking to Sir Alfred, and telling him how I was situated, for not many days after Lady Claudine called upon me, expressed the most tender concern for me, and her great surprise and regret at not having heard before that I was in Brighton. She said she had heard that Colonel Dalglish had taken a house in Kemp Town, but that she had not the slightest idea it was for me.

I thanked her for her politeness, and told her that I should certainly have done myself the pleasure of calling upon her before, but that I had neither spirits nor inclination to exert myself. We then entered into a long conversation concerning the events of the last ten or twelve months, and parted with many expressions of friendship, and hopes that we should frequently enjoy each other's society. She told me she was happy to say the Marquis was much better, and that the sight of his favorite nephew had tended greatly to restore him. She then asked me if I did not think Sir Alfred looked much worse then when he left England."

I said, "I had scarcely observed his looks," for

indeed, Agnes, he had treated me with such marked coolness previously to his departure, that I had made up my mind to behave with the utmost indifference towards him if ever I met him again, and most resolutely did I keep my determination. I invited Claudine several times without even paying him the compliment, and I sedulously avoided entering into conversation with him, although he made many efforts to banish my reserve. One day, however, the Colonel came in very abruptly and said, "I hope, my dear, you will excuse the liberty I have taken, but you have very often heard me say that I am not partial to the society of ladies, and so as you have invited Lady Claudine to dine here to day, I have asked two gentlemen for a little change, for I really could not engage to entertain four women; it would drive me mad."

"I beg Colonel," said I, "you will not consult me on such points, but invite who you please. You are quite at home here."

"Hem! it's very affable of you to talk so, but I wonder what you'll say if I tell you they are two old acquaintances of mine, and as uncouth in their manners as I am myself."

"If they are friends of your's, Colonel, I shall be rejoiced to see them, and hope you will order any thing to promote their comfort."

He then left me, and Julia amused herself in wondering who they could possibly be. I did not trouble myself about it, for I thought it most probable he had met with some military characters with whom he had formerly

been intimate. Guess then my surprise when he entered the room a short time before dinner accompanied by Sir Alfred, and a Major Cameron, a young man of high family whom I had seen several times at the Marquis Raimondi's. Mrs. Ponsonby, as she afterwards informed me, had been made acquainted with the Colonel's intentions, and consequently did not appear at all surprised. I believe I looked somewhat confused, for the Colonel said, "It was very remiss of me, Miss St. Clair, not to have told you the names of the gentlemen I had invited, but I hope it is of no great consequence."

"Not the least," said I, recollecting my situation as mistress of the house, "I am equally pleased to see them."

Both gentlemen bowed, and paid me many compliments, which I fear I received rather awkwardly.

During the evening Sir Alfred placed himself near me, and said, "I feel, Miss St. Clair, that some apology is necessary for the very strange salutation I gave you on first meeting you on the pier, but I had seen your marriage with Lord Merton announced in the Morning Post, may I say with *concern* and surprise, for I felt confident that he was not a man calculated to promote your happiness. Need I tell you how delighted I am to find the announcement incorrect."

I colored violently, and was thinking what reply to make when the Colonel exclaimed in a loud voice, "I must request, Sir Alfred, that you will make your conversation more general, for you see there are only three gentlemen to four ladies, and if we each monopolize one, what is to become of the fourth?"

"She must amuse herself," said Julia, gaily, "in listening to each couple alternately, and must award a recompence to the one whose conversation is the most rational."

"I should think," said the Colonel, drily, "from Miss St. Clair's countenance, that hers is the most entertaining."

"Mine! I was not talking at all, Sir, said I."

"Only with your eyes, my dear, which sometimes say a great deal."

I was really annoyed, and know not what I should have done had not Major Cameron said, "The Colonel's ears are not quite so good as his eyes, madam, and he is a little curious to ——"

"To hear our opinion of *him*," added Sir Alfred. "Are you agreeable, Miss St. Clair?"

"By St. George," said the Colonel, "I am afraid it would be none too flattering, so perhaps you had better not tell me."

"After that speech you cannot be accused of conceit, Sir," said Lady Claudine.

"And yet, ma'am," answered he, "of all my mother's children, and she had a dozen, I think myself the *best*."

We all laughed.

"But that," continued he, "is only human *natur*, as the old woman said."

"What old woman, Sir," asked Julia.

"Why, have you never heard of the old woman who on being asked 'whether she would rather her husband should starve or herself,' replied, 'My husband, to be sure.' Is'n't that human *natur*?"

"I fear," said Mrs. Ponsonby, "there are very few amongst us who do not prefer ourselves to any one else. "Selfishness is a very common failing."

"Yes," remarked Sir Alfred, "we are all rather tenacious when ourselves are concerned, and seldom see our own failings. *L'amour propre est aveugle.*"

"And yet," said I, "I hope there are some disinterested persons to be found, who forget themselves in studying the wishes of others."

"Perhaps so," answered the Colonel, "but I never met with one in my life."

"You are really too severe," said the Major, "you forget that we are in the company of the ladies."

"Oh! by George!" said the Colonel, "I never pay any regard to ladies more than gentlemen: we are all flesh and blood, and I say what I think. I'm not a man of compliments. Don't you believe it."

"There's no deception about Colonel Dalglash," whispered Sir Alfred.

"No," replied I, "but notwithstanding his bluntness, he possesses a kind heart."

"I agree with you, and cannot help admiring him. How difficult it is," added he, "to discover characters! There are some individuals whose tastes, sentiments, propensities, and desires are all discoverable at once, and others, again, are so retiring and reserved, that it requires long acquaintance even partially to know them. I think I have generally observed that those who require most studying to define, are most worthy of being beloved. Is this your opinion?"

"I think," replied I, "that in almost every character there is something to be deprecated, and something to be admired. No character is perfect, nor any so imperfect, but what there is some redeeming point."

"You are too amiable yourself," said he, "to think unkindly of others, and it were well if all your sex resembled you." We continued conversing for some time, Sir Alfred saying many flattering things, which you would consider nonsensical to repeat, and manifesting the most tender interest in all that concerned me. He spoke of the happiness he had enjoyed in my society at Henley, and of his deep regret in not having had an opportunity of bidding me farewell before he quitted England. At a late hour he departed, and I could not help feeling surprised when I contrasted his behaviour with former coolness, and could only attribute it to a feeling of compassion for the very peculiar circumstances in which I was placed. He had never been otherwise than polite, because he is too perfectly well-bred to commit an action unworthy of a gentleman, but from the day on which he first saw me with Alphonso until the time of his departure, he behaved with the utmost formality. Lost in conjectures satisfactorily to account for his whimsical alteration of manner, I did not observe the scrutinizing eye of the Colonel, which was intently fixed on me, until he said, "I think, my dear, I had better invite Sir Alfred Villiers again. I had no idea his presence was so essential to your happiness."

"Essential to my happiness, Sir! What can you possibly mean?"

"Mean! why I mean this: As long as he was in the room, your tongue ran as fast as other women's, but now he's gone, I'll be hanged if any one can get a word out of you."

"Indeed, Sir," said I, "it is so late that I am quite tired, but I did not know that I had talked more than usual." I then retired, unable to bear any more of his raillyery. I don't know how it is, but I am so plagued about this Sir Alfred, that I shall soon quite detest the sound of his name. Julia says that when we were dining some days ago at the Marquis Raimondi's, I was engaged in conversation with some gentleman, and Sir Alfred, who was seated nearly opposite to me, sat gazing at me with the most eager earnestness. Presently he asked Julia, who sat next him, to take wine with him, but as soon as he had filled her glass, he appeared completely absorbed, and again fixed his eyes on me. She waited a quarter of an hour (remember I am giving you her version), when finding his reverie continued, she accepted the challenge of the gentleman on the other side of her. Sir Alfred at length suddenly recollecting himself, turned round, took up his glass, made some unintelligible excuse, and bowed to her.

"You are doubtless not aware," said she drily, "that you have been asleep for some time, and have so completely exhausted my patience, that I have been induced to sip my nectar with some more attentive challenger. But no doubt you were up late last night, and are now overpowered with fatigue. Pray sleep on."

"Why did you not awake me, Miss Fitz Williams,"

said he, laughing. "Drowsiness is a most unpleasant sensation."

"Your dreams seemed so delightful," said she, glancing at me, "that I thought it would have been a pity."

"I do not deserve your pardon," said he, refusing to understand her looks, "for I have been guilty of extreme rudeness, but I am subject to occasional fits of absence. It is an hereditary malady, and therefore I trust it will rather excite your compassion than your resentment."

"Indeed," said Julia, "I do feel *great* pity, because I have been told that absence of mind invariably proceeds from one of these causes. The person afflicted is either in love or ——"

"You may attribute it to this cause if you please," interrupted he, "for I *am* in love with many things. I rode to the Dyke this morning, and I was quite in love with the view."

"Fie, Sir Alfred," said Julia, "I thought equivocation was a sin. When you make your next confession, mind this is not forgotten."

"I am not surprised," answered he "that ladies should so far surpass us in their attainments, for their *curiosity* on all subjects is immense. Their mighty minds even seek to penetrate into one's very thoughts. But now suffer me to make my peace with you Miss Fitz Williams," and taking up the decanter he offered to fill her glass, "for I am desperately afraid of offending your sex."

"With pleasure," said she, "but had you not better take one with Miss St. Clair first?"

On hearing my name I looked across, and thus put a stop to their conversation. Julia as an excuse said, "I was just remarking, Miss St. Clair, how much better you have been since you came to Brighton."

"I have indeed* derived great benefit from the sea breeze," I replied, unconscious for how long a period I had been the subject of their discourse.

"And I hope ere you quit Brighton, Miss St. Clair," said Sir Alfred, "to see the bloom restored to your cheek."

"Hem," said the Colonel, who always delights in seeing me confused, "I am sure there is bloom enough on them now. I think you possess some magical art, Sir Alfred."

"Indeed, Sir," said I, "*you* cause me to blush yourself more frequently than any one else."

"Do I, my dear? Then perhaps I can't see.. To be sure I'm growing old, but I've not begun spectacles yet."

To my great relief, Lady Claudine arose before I had time to give the Colonel an answer, and the ladies all retired to the drawing-room.

Lady Claudine took a chair next mine, and after a good deal of general conversation, she told me a tale which both surprised and affected me.

O Agnes, would you ever have supposed that Josephine could have been so base as to have bribed a servant to speak ill of me. Yet this is true, and I am no longer surprised at Sir Alfred's former coolness, or at

Claudine's being so distant with me for some time, for she tells me that before she left Henley she engaged a young woman as lady's maid, who had for a short time been in my service, and that she was always endeavouring to get into conversation about me, but as she never allows herself to talk very familiarly with any of her domestics, the girl could not say a great deal. Yet, notwithstanding all Claudine's efforts to prevent it, she would make remarks upon my violent temper, haughty manners, and strange conduct. She told Claudine that I went every day to meet a young man to whom I was much attached, but whom my father had forbidden the house, and that when the weather did not permit me to go out, I used to send her with letters to him. It was some time, she says, before she would allow herself to believe this tale, but she one day mentioned the report to her cousin Alfred, and on hearing him say he had reason to believe it was true, she confesses that she began to think very differently of me, and that it was only a few days since she had discovered how unjustly I had been accused. "Then," said Claudine, "this young woman, finding upon what very intimate terms I was with you, began, I suppose, to feel some alarm, and requested me never to mention to you any thing she had ever said. Excessively astonished, I enquired what could be her motive?"

"O none, ma'am, I assure you," said she, "only it would look as if I made mischief, and I should be sorry for any one to think such a thing of me."

"I remarked that she turned very pale, and fancying

all was not right, I said, "Perhaps you have told me what is not correct about Miss St. Clair, and in this case I shall certainly consider it my duty to inform her."

"Dear! no, ma'am, how could you think of such a thing?"

"I am sorry to say that I have strong reasons for thinking so, from your conduct, and if I detect you in having uttered falsehoods, I shall immediately discharge you, for I shall consider it dangerous to have such a young person in my house."

"I continued talking to her for some time," observed Claudine, "when either remorse or fright made her confess that she had been bribed by Miss Charlton to speak ill of you to me, and to represent you in a very unamiable light. When she made the confession I was thunderstruck, and asked her how she could have been so wicked as to have consented to say what was false."

"Indeed, ma'am," replied she, "I am very sorry for it, for a more sweet-tempered young lady than Miss St. Clair never lived, but Miss Charlton gave me some money, and promised to give me a great deal more if I would declare all this to you, and so I was tempted, but I will never do such a thing again."

"I said, I hoped not, and after reprimanding her very severely, told her I could certainly not allow her to remain with me, but that as she seemed repentant, I would not expose her conduct publicly. Neither will I, but I have many reasons for making it known to you, and the principal one is that it may serve as a little

excuse for the alteration in my behaviour before I left Henley, which you doubtless attributed to some caprice of temper."

I did not deny that I had remarked it, and said, "I wondered what motive Miss Charlton could possibly have had in wishing *her* to think ill of me more than any one else."

"I," said Claudine, "have little difficulty in discovering her motive, Miss St. Clair. Don't you know she took a great fancy to my cousin Alfred, but you do not choose to understand me, I see," observing that I did not attempt to make any answer. "However, I have not failed to tell him of this treachery."

"Indeed," answered I, "I would much rather you should have said nothing about it."

"Ah! Miss St. Clair," said she, gaily, "it is very well for you to say so, but I could not bear that you should any longer be suspected so unjustly."

"And yet," said I, "by Sir Alfred Villiers I must still be accused of imprudence, because —"

At this moment the gentlemen joined us, and we had no opportunity of continuing our conversation that evening. You will no longer be surprised that Sir Alfred should have sat gazing at me for a quarter of an hour, for he must certainly have thought me the strangest creature in existence. His own senses he *must* credit before any one's assertions, and it was by my own lips he was requested to keep secret the meeting I had with Alphonso.

But on looking over my letter, I am really vexed

that I have told you so much, and fear you will think me half mad. Abruptly, therefore, will I conclude, and remain,

Your ever affectionate
MERELINA.

LETTER XLVIII.

MRS. PONSONBY TO AGNES.

Brighton.

Brighton air, or Brighton company, or both combined, have completely metamorphosed two people whom I always used to consider very rational, into something very much the reverse. Sir Alfred Villiers, whose conversation was so instructive, so improving, and so serious, is now so remarkably absent, that you might as well be playing at the children's game of "Cross Questions and Crooked Answers," as talking to him, for when I asked him one morning what was his opinion of a work which had just come out, entitled "Charles O'Malley," he replied, "It looks very much like rain, indeed, madam."

"Pray," said I, "do you mean that Lorrequer or his work looks like rain?"

"I really beg your pardon, Mrs. Ponsonby," said he, "I thought you asked my opinion of the weather."

Then there is Miss St. Clair, usually so attentive, so sociable, and so kind, always to be found sitting pensively in her own apartment, and quite regardless of all that is passing around. Yet when these two people are together, their spirits are almost overpowering, and their discourse animated. In fact, Agnes, it is quite clear that the little winged urchin has pierced both their hearts with his sharpest darts, and committed sad devastation. How long it will be before they choose to confess the mischief he has wrought to each other I cannot say, but I really hope an *éclaircissement* will soon take place, or they will both require to be sent to a lunatic asylum. The Colonel, who is delighted in witnessing it, jokes and says he supposes *we* shall soon receive our orders to quit, but Merelina persists in declaring it is never her intention to marry. Be that as it may, scarcely a day elapses without Sir Alfred calling at Kemp Town upon some pretext or another.

If we are dining out, he endeavours to sit next Miss St. Clair; if we are walking out he offers her his arm. When she is present he always talks *to* her, and when she is absent he always talks *of* her.

On one occasion when he called, the Colonel had taken Miss St. Clair and Julia out for a ride, and I was at home alone. He concealed his disappointment, and entered into a very interesting conversation with me. He gave me an account of his travels, and expressed the pleasure he had experienced in visiting those parts of Asia, the history of which had such immediate connexion with the history of the Great Saviour of

mankind, and his soaring mind for a time forgetting sublunary things, seemed almost inspired as he spake of his emotions in beholding the scene of Christ's sufferings.

"I fancied," said he, "that if I lived where such thoughts were constantly forced upon the mind by the contemplation of such objects, I *must* be religious, but alas! I soon discovered that unless the heart is right with God, there can be no communion. The imagination may be worked upon, until its wild chimeras assume the appearance of feeling, but feeling which only lasts during excitement is *no* feeling. It is this appeal to the senses which I so strongly condemn in the Romish religion. You go into their churches, and as you gaze around, you see pictures so exquisitely finished, and subjects so imposing, that the mind is in a complete ecstacy, and this enthusiasm is mistaken for devotion. You contemplate the dying agonies of the "Man of Sorrows," and fancy that you adore *him*, whereas it is too frequently only the image or representation which you admire. At least," continued he, "I have found it the case with myself, and never more so than when I ascended the Mount of Olives. I pictured Jesus on his bended knees pleading that if it were possible the cup might pass from him, until I felt my whole soul as it were transported, and my affections entirely weaned from earth.

"I almost longed for death, and thought that henceforward I should not have one wish relative to any thing in this world. I congratulated myself upon this

happy state of mind, and thought I had overcome every desire of the flesh, but since I have left this sacred spot, and mixed with my fellow creatures, I find that I am only mortal, and that my wishes require constant checking, my thoughts restraining, and my heart governing."

"Yes," said I, "we are all very apt to deceive ourselves, and I believe none of us know the real state of our minds until we meet with some trial. Hence the benefit of experiencing vicissitudes. We often say that if we were in such and such circumstances, we should act very differently from others, but we cannot tell until we are put to the test."

"No, madam, we cannot, for 'the heart is deceitful above all things,' and were we to spend our whole lives in endeavouring to discover its iniquity, we should still attain to a very imperfect knowledge of it. Yet it behoves each one of us to make frequent and strict self examination into its state. We are severe in judging others, alas! how very severe, whilst towards ourselves *only* are we lenient."

"And yet," added I, "I do not think *you* are wont to judge with severity."

"I am flattered by your favorable opinion, madam, yet I assure you I do not deserve it, for I am too apt to condemn, without ascertaining how far I am justified in doing so."

"Really," said I, "you are quite unmerciful towards yourself, and if Miss St. Clair sees you looking so unusually grave, she will be quite frightened."

"Miss St. Clair! Is it possible you think *she* would be at all concerned about my looks?"

"Why she is so very compassionate that I think she would pity any one in distress."

"Universal pity, madam, is scarcely worth possessing."

"You are more covetous than I imagined, Sir Alfred."

"Nay, do not sport thus with my feelings, for dare I only hope that Miss St. Clair felt the *least* interested about me, I should be the happiest of men."

"It is quite impossible," said I, "for me to know the state of Miss St. Clair's mind with respect to you, for I am not her Father Confessor."

"But you are her friend and her adviser, Mrs. Ponsonby."

"I am, but I should not *presume* to advise her in an affair of the heart unless she particularly requested it, although I think it most probable she would descend to consult me, if she entertained serious thoughts of changing her situation."

"Then you think that at present she is free from any engagement."

"I am sure of it. Miss St. Clair has had several opportunities of settling herself, but she is not a young lady who would rashly plunge into a thing of this kind, without duly considering whether it would be productive of happiness or misery."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Ponsonby, and accuse me not of impertinence if I venture to ask one question more. Did you ever hear of an attachment to a young man whom her father disapproved, and forbade the house."

"You do my young friend injustice," said I, "in supposing she would degrade herself so much as to encourage any person in a clandestine intimacy."

"And yet,—but I trust you will forgive me, for my happiness depends materially upon my right understanding of this matter,—I myself accidentally discovered Miss St. Clair three times in earnest conversation with a young and very intelligent looking gentleman, and was by herself requested not to mention the circumstance."

"I can set you quite at ease respecting this affair, I am happy to say," said I, "for Miss St. Clair was performing an act of charity towards an unfortunate cousin," and I then related to him the whole story of Alphonso Maltravers.

His admiration knew no bounds, and I really thought he would have gone frantic with delight. Never before did I witness a young man in such a state of joy, not even your Wallace when I consented to yield my darling girl to him.

He said he had hardly known how to suspect her of carrying on a clandestine correspondence, and yet he had himself seen so much to warrant such a suspicion, that he could not help having entertained fears, but that now he was perfectly satisfied with my explanation. He then hinted his attachment, and appeared anxious to hear my opinion.

I said "that if I might judge from my own observation, I should say he had as good a chance of success as any one else, and perhaps a better, but that Miss

St. Clair had never by any chance made any remark to me which could enable me to say positively the state of her feelings towards him."

"I am satisfied, madam, if you can only assure me that I am not an object of aversion to her, but her manner is so very reserved to me that I sometimes fear my attentions are disagreeable."

"I think, Sir Alfred," said I, "you should take into consideration the situation of this young creature, left her own mistress at so early an age, and then ask yourself whether it is not absolutely necessary that she should be very guarded in her behaviour."

"You are right, madam, and I am not surprised that a young lady under the protection of a person like yourself should be all Miss St. Clair is. Yet I confess it is so rare to see such beauty, talent, piety, and innocence combined in one so young, that I sometimes fancy the possessor must despise all others who have not attained to the same degree of excellence as herself."

"Then by this very accusation you prove her fallible, for humility is of all Christian graces the most beautiful, and one which I really think you ought to give Miss St. Clair credit for, as she is not conscious of her superiority."

"I am aware of this, and it is the charming simplicity and artlessness of her manners, together with her extreme modesty, which have so completely won my admiration, and—and"

He hesitated, for the door opened, and Major Cameron entered the room.

"Gentlemen," said I, "you are truly unfortunate this morning, and doomed to be disappointed, for the Colonel has taken both the young ladies over to Worthing, and I fear they will not be home yet."

Of course they very politely *said* they were equally happy in finding me at home, and after a few general remarks they wished me "good morning," and departed. I have not repeated any part of this interesting conversation with Sir Alfred to Miss St. Clair, because I am afraid it would occasion restraint in his presence, but nothing would give me more real pleasure than to witness the union of these two pious and worthy young people, in which case my every earthly desire would be fulfilled, and with Simeon I could exclaim, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

Your devoted mother,

ELIZA PONSONBY.

LETTER XLIX.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Brighton.

Most anxiously have I been expecting to receive a letter from you, my dear Agnes, for the last month, and scarcely know to what cause to attribute your long silence. I hope indisposition is not the occasion, yet when I remember how very exact you are in the performance of every engagement, I almost fear something serious is the matter.

The philosopher may say if he pleases that friendship is but a *name*, and though I agree with him in considering the friendship of the world as only nominal, yet I am sure *our* friendship is founded upon a substantial basis, and our affection for each other is deep, sincere, and lasting. We received our lessons from the same kind friend, we derived our pleasures from the same pure sources, we gained instruction from the same selected books, and the only difference between us is, that *you* have profited better by the counsels of your dear mamma than I have, and have outrun me in the Christian race. You have obtained a more complete victory over your sinful inclinations, and are less excited by passing events than I am, but do I love you the less

for excelling me? Ah, no! Do I envy you? Ah, no! I only try to *imitate* you, and this effort is surely rather to be commended than otherwise. I dare scarcely hope to equal you, but still I will endeavour to do so.

My afflictions have not been sent in vain, for they have both improved and humbled me, and I trust my will is in some measure brought into subjection to the will of God. Since I last wrote, I have had a very severe struggle with my feelings in striving to restrain them sufficiently to prevent their influencing my decision in a very important affair—perhaps, Agnes, the most important of my whole life, and certainly one which will involve all my happiness or misery for this world, with my hopes for the world to come. You doubtless guess to what I allude, and probably accuse me of being very changeable to *think* of suffering myself to be bound in the chains of wedlock after having so frequently asserted my determination to live in “single blessedness.” But, indeed, I did not then exactly know my own heart, nor was I aware how soon the affections are won by repeated acts of kindness and sympathising tenderness.

When I think over the events of the last month I feel more than I can describe. If I relate these events to you, you will, perhaps, deem me weak—if I conceal them, you will call me unkind. Well, I think I will risk the former charge, and unbosom myself to you as a sister. I had for some weeks been *compelled* to observe that Sir Alfred Villiers paid me marked attention, and sought with avidity to discover my sentiments and general habits, but yet I did not fancy he had any other feeling

towards me than that of a brother. However, a few days ago, Lady Claudine and he called, and invited us all to take a walk with them on the pier, as the band was going to play. They had frequently done this before on the same occasion, so we all consented except the Colonel, who said he had letters to write which would detain him at home.

It was a lovely evening in August, and the sea air was most refreshing after a day of unusual sultriness. We listened to the music, and watched the gentle rippling of the waves, and quoted poetry, and saw "the moon shed its silvery radiance o'er the blue bosom of the waters," until we had worked ourselves up into a very poetical humour. Sir Alfred Villiers had been discoursing with his usual eloquence, and so completely absorbed my attention, that I did not for some time observe that we were left alone. I was vexed with myself for not having sooner noticed the absence of our companions, and turning round in search of them, said, "I thought all our party had been together!"

"I believe," said Sir Alfred, "they were quite tired of this scene and of my conversation, and so they walked away."

"We will join them if you please," said I.

"Then I have tired *you* likewise, Miss St. Clair."

"No, indeed, you have not, but—"

"But you are anxious to abridge the pleasure I enjoy in your society, and this half hour which has been the pleasantest I ever passed in my life, has to *you* been irksome."

I thought this so very strange a speech that I scarcely knew how to reply, but at last I said, "They might as well have told me they were going."

"If Miss St. Clair repents the happiness she has occasioned me," continued he, "I will never again seek for a renewal of it, yet if she knew what such a sacrifice would cost me, she would be less cruel."

"Indeed, Sir Alfred, I did not know, I did not think that—" and I stammered so dreadfully that I could not utter another syllable.

"Surely, Miss St. Clair, you cannot be insensible to the passion with which you have inspired me. O, do you not know that I admire, love, adore you above every other of your sex, and that if you would only suffer me to encourage the delightful hope of one day calling you *mine*, you would make me too, too happy." Fortunately for me he could not see my face, for I am sure it was covered with blushes. I did not say a single word, but I felt dreadfully embarrassed.

Whether from my silence he understood my consent, I cannot say, but he continued to talk for some time in the same enraptured strain until he drew from me a promise that I would consent to share the joys and sorrows of my future life with him.

I was really glad when we reached home, for he expressed his *gratitude*, as he pleased to call it, in such strong terms, that I was really uncomfortable.

You may be sure the Colonel does not fail to torment me, and Julia, the merry Julia, is almost as bad as he. In fact, Mrs. Ponsonby is the only person who pays the

least regard to my feelings, and I would gladly immure myself in a dungeon until this affair is settled, if I could thereby escape the Colonel's jokes. I need scarcely tell you that Sir Alfred is now a constant visitor, and devotes all his time, his thoughts, and everything else to me.

I told him the other day I thought it was wrong to manifest such excessive partiality, but he silenced me by saying—"My dear Merelina, (for you must suffer me now to set aside all formality) let me for a time, at least, indulge in my dreams of happiness, and give vent to emotions which a sense of propriety has hitherto obliged me to conceal. Did you but know the alternate hopes and fears which have now elevated, and then depressed me; did you but comprehend half the anxiety I have suffered on your account, you would not wonder at the present overflowing of my joy. I know that it is wrong to idolize anything on earth, but I find it impossible to feel anything like composure, so great, so unexpected, is my bliss."

I could not but feel flattered, and to deny that I felt pleasure in hearing him thus express the ardour of his love would be ridiculous.

"We have been acquainted," continued he, "for some time, and know so thoroughly each other's tastes, that I hope it will not be long ere I am permitted to claim a title of which I shall be so justly proud. Then, my Merelina, will we endeavour to pursue such a course of life, as shall render us happy on earth, and blessed in heaven. Fortunately there is a similarity in our pursuits and opinions: we are both pilgrims journeying to the

same blissful country, and looking for the same glorious reward. May it be our study to approve ourselves unto him who ‘searcheth the heart and trieth the reins,’ and to assist and vie with each other in endeavouring to fit ourselves for the company of saints.”

I added a mute “Amen,” and my eyes filled with tears.

“It is natural,” said he, casting on me a look full of tenderness, “that you should contemplate this change in your situation with emotion, but fear not. I love you with the purest, deepest love. When your young heart bounds with joy mine shall rejoice too, and when it is overpowered by sadness, mine shall sympathise in its griefs.”

I was deeply affected, dear Agnes, and you will not be surprised if I confess that I thought there was not such another man on earth as Sir Alfred Villiers. Our conversation, however, was interrupted by the Colonel’s abruptly entering the room, and exclaiming,

“Upon my honour, Sir Alfred, you’re the oddest fish alive.”

“Indeed, Sir! that is news, for I always thought I was an animal, belonging to the class of bipeds. But of what crime have I been guilty?”

“Guilty! why of inconsistency to be sure. I was told that you *always* passed the hours between ten and one in your study, and consequently that you were always to be found at home during that time. I wanted to speak with you on particular business, and sent a servant with a note to say that if agreeable I would

spend the evening with you. I bade him wait for an answer, but he returned saying you were not at home, and that no one knew whither you had gone. I then sent him to the Reading Rooms, thinking it was most probable he would find you *there*, and to my utter amazement, behold! you are in the very same house with me singing canzonets to your 'lady love.' I find that in future if I want you, I must make enquiries after Miss St. Clair. Then turning to me he said, 'Really, my dear, if you will have the goodness to issue cards every morning, stating where you are to be found, it will save me a great deal of trouble.'

I blushed deeply, and Sir Alfred replied, "I am exceedingly sorry, Colonel, that you should have had so much trouble on my account, but I shall be most happy to see you this evening, or at any other time when you will honor me with your company."

"Hem! all that palaver is very fine, but I don't think I shall come now, for I can tell you my business in a very few words, if you will just walk upstairs into the study. You will excuse us, Miss St. Clair, but you see it is about money matters, and women never understand such things. I am just going to talk about settlements and so on, but if you like you can come too."

"No, indeed," said I, "I would rather have nothing to do with such matters. Let me still feel that I am guided by a parent."

He brushed a tear from his usually stern looking countenance, and, giving Sir Alfred rather a rough

salute, said "Come along, then, old fellow, for I have something else to do besides prating with the girls. Bless my soul! they will think themselves goddesses, if you men make such fools of them."

When the Colonel came in to dinner he accosted me thus, "Well, Miss St. Clair, I tell you what, I have no idea of losing time, and so I have settled every thing relating to your pecuniary affairs quite satisfactorily to myself and Sir Alfred Villiers too, for, by George, I think he'd be satisfied if you had not a sixpenny piece, but God bless me! *love* makes people mad, quite mad. Well, well, I suppose such things must be, but that is'nt to the purpose. You are to be married early in September, and this is the second week in August, so you see you've about three weeks to prepare. I suppose you will want an extra pair of carriage horses, for you'll be driving to milliners, and dressmakers, and jewellers, and the Lord knows where."

"My dear Sir," said I, "indeed it is quite impossible —I cannot be married so soon."

"Soon! why you would be sure to say it was soon, if you waited half a dozen years, but I suppose it is fashionable to talk so. However, the truth is this, Sir Alfred is anxious to leave the Marquis Raimondi's as soon as possible, and get into a house of his own, and I am anxious to return to my estate in Oxfordshire. Besides, I only took this house certain up to Michaelmas for you, so, all things considered, the sooner you're married the better."

As I found it useless to argue with the Colonel, I at

length desisted, but when Sir Alfred told me of the arrangement, I strongly objected, and urged delay.

"To what purpose, my beloved girl," said he, "should we delay any longer? I have taken a very pretty place at Clifton, which spot I fixed upon because I thought you would like to be near your friend Mrs. Fitz-Williams, of whom I have so repeatedly heard you speak, and because I am in hopes you will find the climate salubrious."

"Have you indeed been so kind," I exclaimed, "how can I repay you?"

"By complying with my wishes in consenting that our union should take place at the time appointed by Colonel Dalglisch and myself," said he.

"I ought not, I will not, refuse," I replied, "but I must plead one fortnight longer. The six months from my father's death will then be completed, for O, happy as I now feel, I cannot forget the respect due to his memory, nor bury the past in total oblivion. I entered life full of hope and bright anticipations for the future, nor did I fancy how soon the prospect would change. During the short space of two years, I have experienced the most severe trials, and the most bitter disappointments, and now, though brightness shines around me, and my path seems strewed with flowers, I would still remember that unalloyed happiness is not the lot of man, and that I must not expect exemption from sorrow for any length of time, but constantly bear in mind that if I am blessed with every thing which can render me happy in this world, the greater watchfulness

will be required, lest in enjoying the gifts, I forget the donor?"

"Be it so then, Merelina," said Sir Alfred, "but though I admire and approve your sentiments, and though I hope we shall bear every affliction which a just and holy God sees fit to send upon us with patience, and recollect amidst all the vicissitudes we may meet, that "Such is Life," yet for one little while let us banish whatever would tend to make us sad, and yield to those pleasurable sensations which *I* cannot but experience in the contemplation of my future career."

If I tell you, Agnes, that such kindness did indeed remove all sorrow from my mind, I think you will not be much surprised, and now I am as busy as it is possible to be in making preparations for this event. I must tell you that Major Cameron is very attentive to Julia, and I shall not be at all surprised if by and bye he finds himself under the necessity of following us to Clifton, and requesting her to make an exchange of hearts.

But fearing I must have wearied you, I will now terminate this apparently interminable letter, and beg you will accept the continued love of

Your ever affectionate

MERELINA.

LETTER L.

AGNES TO MERELINA.

Rectory House.

No language can describe the pleasure with which I perused your last most interesting letter. I cannot but feel gratified in being the chosen friend of one, whose situation in life is so exalted, and whose mind is so superior, and I feel almost inclined to quote your own words, when in anticipation of your first entrance into the world, you were so elated with the prospect which was opening before you that you declared yourself absolutely dazzled by the brilliant perspective.

To see you the wife of Sir Alfred Villiers has long been my wish, because from what I have heard of his character I have reason to believe him all that the most aspiring woman could desire, and his deep and fervent piety makes me feel towards him something almost approaching to veneration, but that *I* should be blest with your society, and have you reside near *me*, is more than I ever dared even to hope. O Merelina, this is indeed happiness as unexpected as it will be delightful, and the excess of my joy disables me from attending to any of my

duties. More than once has my Wallace been obliged to rouse me from the transporting reverie into which your letter has plunged me, and to remind me that notwithstanding all my expected bliss, in which he fully participates, all, all must one day vanish, and "life's fantastic dream be o'er." I know he is quite right, but I still think, with Sir Alfred Villiers, that there can be no impropriety in yielding to joy for a little while, and I intend to make the day on which you arrive here one of universal rejoicing. I shall give a dinner both to my rich and poor neighbours on the occasion, and I hope you will not refuse to partake of it. Our house, as you know, is within a very few miles of Clifton, and it will only be a pleasant drive for you. But I shall intrude no longer upon your time, as you have no doubt letters to read now far more interesting than any which can be penned by

Your unalterable friend,
AGNES.

LETTER LI.

MERELINA TO AGNES.

Brighton.

My heart is too full to permit me to say *much*, and yet I feel that I should like once again to address a few lines to my beloved friend. Oh! Agnes, to-morrow is the day fixed for me to become the wife of a man who has done me the honour to select me from so many of my sex, more deserving perhaps of his esteem than myself. Yet thus much I *dare* say, that no girl could feel more deeply sensible of his love, or resolve more fully than I do, to devote herself to the fulfilment of his wishes, and the promotion of his happiness, and if we do not "jog down the hill of life" contentedly together, it shall be owing to no fault of mine. But I am not apprehensive, for *gli è appunto quel che mi ci vuole*, and I doubt not we shall enjoy each other's confidence.

I am not quite sure that I shall be as submissive as Milton makes Eve, when in answer to a command received from Adam, she says—

" My author and disposer ! What thou bid'st
Unargued I obey."

The love of argument probably was not so strongly implanted in our first parent as it is in her progeny, for I confess if I *obey*, I shall now and then like to *argue* a little. Sir Alfred has just come into the room, and is looking over my shoulder. He says this is shocking doctrine of mine, and that I must turn to another part of Milton, and see that to woman it is said—

————— “and to thy husband’s will
Thine shall submit : he over thee shall rule.”

But I am not going to let him know all my secrets yet, so as he still continues to look over me, I shall write no more, except to say that we shall feel great pleasure in accepting your kind invitation.

We are to spend a few weeks in visiting the southern counties of England, before we settle ourselves at Clifton.

And now, my dear Agnes, in great haste, I sign myself, probably for the last time,

Your’s, with much affection,

MERELINA ST. CLAIR.

LETTER LII.

MRS. PONSONBY TO AGNES.

Brighton.

My every wish, my every hope is fulfilled, for the two dear children whom I love almost equally have attained to as much earthly happiness as usually falls to the lot of mortality, and now when it pleases my Maker to summon me into his awful presence, I shall not have one worldly care to oppress my departing spirit, but in the arms of my almost idolized girls, I can breathe out my expiring sighs in peace, and with joy resign my fleeting breath.

Yesterday Sir Alfred Villiers received at the altar his beautiful bride from the hands of Colonel Dalglish, and never have I seen a more happy and elegant looking couple approach that sacred place.

Very soon after the ceremony was performed they bade us adieu, attended by our prayers, our blessings, and our smiles. Merelina was much affected, but Sir Alfred was all life and spirits.

Lady Claudine has promised to be their first visitor. Julia and I remain here a few days longer, and then *she* will return to her parents, and *I* to my beloved Agnes

until I can meet with a pretty little cottage situated near Clifton, where I hope to spend my few remaining days, and to devote myself to works of charity and usefulness. The Colonel will not leave Brighton until he has settled every thing relating to Merelina's affairs. He has acted the part of a father towards her since she lost her own, and I believe she is deeply grateful, for she has given him a most pressing invitation to go and see her, and has promised that he shall not be annoyed by much female society. Towards *me* she has acted with the greatest liberality, and yet with such delicacy as to prevent any unpleasant feeling of obligation.

I regret to say we have heard that Lady St. Clair leads a very gay life, and passes her time in the most frivolous and unprofitable manner. She is resolved *a qualunque costo* to pursue her reckless career, and what her feelings will be when she hears of the marriage of Sir Alfred Villiers with Miss St. Clair, I cannot easily conceive. But I will not contemplate, at the present joyous period, a character so unamiable, as I find it impossible to speak in terms of commendation of her, and charity would restrain me from uttering any thing which could deteriorate her in the opinions of others. I am looking forward with the most intense pleasure to the time when I shall see my former protégé and my own Agnes with their beloved partners around me, and oh! how fervently do I pray that they may both experience as much happiness as *I* did, ere relentless death tore from me the object of my warmest affection. May their young hearts rise in fervent prayer to the Almighty

Disposer of all things, and may they beseech him to pour his spirit upon them, and to guide them in the paths of duty. I would have them remember that—

“ Woman’s lot is on them ! silent tears to weep
And patient smiles to wear through suffering’s hour,
And sumless riches from affection’s deep
To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower !
And to make idols, and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship ! therefore pray !
Earth *will* forsake—Oh ! happy to have given
Th’ unbroken heart’s first fragrance unto Heaven.”

May they seek to build their hopes on Christ, the “ Rock of ages,” and then though storms arise and “ billows roll,” they will have nought to fear ; and when the last great trumpet shall sound, and call to life those bodies which for ages have been mouldering in the dust, they will await the sound with joy, and be welcomed into the “ Eternal city” with “ Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

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